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ABSTRACT

The Wisconsin "Learnfare" policy requires that teenagers receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) attend school regularly until they have completed high school. The population of teen parents and dependent teens receiving AFDC from September 1988 through December 1989 included 22,241 males and 30,995 females. About half of the teen parents were excused from the Learnfare rules, as were about 2 percent of dependent teens. A survey of public school district administrators on the implementation of Learnfare in the 420 school districts in the state was conducted in April 1990, with follow-up telephone calls, resulting in responses from 351 districts (82 percent). About one-fourth of the districts reported that they have been involved in meetings with county social services agencies to discuss policies or programs related to Learnfare. About one-sixth of the districts reported that they had school staff involved in inservice training regarding Learnfare. Policies varied as to how Learnfare was handled; some districts reported altering attendance policies. A survey of the directors of the 72 county departments of social or human services (100 percent response) in August 1990 showed that most counties do not refer Learnfare teens to county social work staff unless the family requests help. About one-third of the counties thought that the Learnfare policy has contributed to increased parental involvement in teens' schooling. An evaluation project was being designed to determine Learnfare's impact on school attendance, completion rates, and AFDC teens' childbearing. (Appendices contain the public school and county surveys.) (KC)

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REPORT ON THE LEARNFARE EVALUATION

January, 1991

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REPORT ON THE LEARNFARE EVALUATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June, 1988 the Wisconsin legislature authorized that an independent evaluation of Learnfare be conducted, and in July, 1989 the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute secured the contract for this evaluation. This report meets the requirement of the contract to provide "an evaluation report on Learnfare covering activities during the first two years of the Learnfare waiver."

1. The Learnfare evaluation design approved by the state and federal governments in December, 1989, for completion on June 30, 1993, is testing four main hypotheses: that Learnfare increases the total school attendance of teenage AFDC recipients, increases the school completion rates of teenage AFDC recipients, improves the school performance of AFDC teens, and reduces the incidence of childbearing by teen AFDC recipients. The hypothesis testing will be based upon actual school records of AFDC and non-AFDC teens in Milwaukee and five representative school districts.

2. The evaluators requested copies of existing Department of Health and Social Services computer records for AFDC recipients ages thirteen through nineteen for the period from 1984 to present. It was expected that DHSS records could be used to summarize the school enrollment experience of Learnfare teens statewide and by individual county and school district both during and prior to the Learnfare experiment. However, after extensive analysis of the data, it became evident that the records on AFDC teens used to administer the Learnfare policy have serious omissions and errors which preclude their use to describe changes in student enrollment over time. (See discussion, pp. 26-28) The data in this report will guide in the description of the Learnfare experiment and aid in identifying subpopulations and samples to be used for hypothesis testing. It does not, however, provide reliable outcome measures for the Learnfare experiment and should not be used for such purposes.

3. The evaluators created longitudinal files of all teen dependents and teen parents receiving AFDC and their families in order to establish the Learnfare status and reported school experience of teens in the Learnfare experiment. During the sixteen month period from September, 1988 through December, 1989, 53,236 AFDC recipients were youth ages thirteen through nineteen, potentially subject to Learnfare. This included 41,778 dependent teens living with a natural or adoptive parent and 11,464 teen parents (including 1,173 dependents who became teen parents during the study period).

4. The length of time teens remained on AFDC and potentially subject to the Learnfare experiment varied widely. Slightly more than half of the 6,485 thirteen year olds on AFDC in September, 1988 continued on AFDC for sixteen

months. By contrast only about a third of the sixteen year olds and less than ten percent of the seventeen year olds on AFDC in September, 1988, continued on AFDC and were potentially subject to the Learnfare requirement for sixteen months. 3,278 of the thirteen to seventeen year olds on AFDC in September, 1988, were on AFDC for three months or less. (See graphs, pp. 12-13)

5. The Family Support Act specifically targets teen mothers as a priority population for service, as did the original legislation proposing Learnfare. The participation rate in Learnfare for this group, however, is significantly lower than that for dependent teens. As of December, 1989, forty-seven percent of teen parents coded as non-graduates were exempt from school enrollment or attendance under Learnfare. By contrast, only two percent of teen dependents coded as non-graduates were exempted from school. (See graphs, pp. 17-18) The school exemption rate for teen parents was higher in the rural counties, where fifty-two percent of non-graduates were exempt from school under Learnfare, compared to forty-six percent for Milwaukee County and forty-six percent for the other urban counties.

6. The majority of AFDC teens expected to attend school under Learnfare were coded for the Milwaukee Public Schools, making up forty-three percent of the total as of December, 1989. Twenty-five percent of the teens were from twenty other large urban school districts. (See tables pp. 31-32) Thirty-five districts in the state (including some elementary only districts) had no teens subject to the Learnfare requirement and 157 school districts had less than ten Learnfare teens each. VTAE schools were listed for only eight percent of teen parents, and less than one percent of all teens. (See discussion, pp. 29-30)

7. The evaluators surveyed the district administrators of the state's 429 school districts (with an 82 percent response rate) and the directors of the 72 county departments of social and human services (with a 100 percent response rate) for information on the implementation of Learnfare at the local level. Responses are summarized on pages 33-36 and in the Appendix.

8. In June, 1990 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services required an accelerated evaluation study by September 1, 1991 which would test Learnfare's impact on AFDC teens' school attendance. There has been no significant progress since June in DHSS negotiations for Milwaukee Public School data, making completion of the accelerated study by September, 1991 highly unlikely. The evaluators' ten month research design and contract for the accelerated evaluation is awaiting Milwaukee Public School approval for the release of student records and the provision of DHSS computer tapes not yet delivered for the pre-Learnfare AFDC teen population.

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This report responds to the requirement of the Learnfare evaluation contract for "an evaluation report on Learnfare covering activities during the first two years of the Learnfare waiver," due within sixty days of October 31, 1990. (DHSS, Request for Proposals - Evaluation of the Welfare Reform Waivers, p. 8) The report summarizes the status of the Learnfare evaluation, describes the early implementation of Learnfare, analyzes the AFDC teen population required to meet the Learnfare policy, and summarizes the reported experiences of county and school officials in implementing Learnfare. The report does not provide outcome data which measures the success or failure of the Learnfare policy. An accelerated Learnfare evaluation study of the impact of Learnfare on student attendance has been delayed pending arrangements made between the Department of Health and Social Services and the Milwaukee Public Schools for the release of student data. The final evaluation report on the Learnfare Demonstration which tests hypotheses regarding the success of the experiment in improving school attendance, performance and completion will be submitted to the Legislature by July 1, 1993.

In 1990 the evaluators examined the state's Computer Reporting Network (CRN) system files which are used to administer the AFDC program and to enforce the Learnfare policy. A longitudinal file was created of the monthly AFDC and Learnfare status of teens during the Learnfare experiment and a second file tracked the experience of AFDC caseheads over a two year period. This report identifies many issues preliminary to the hypothesis testing, including patterns of length of time on AFDC as a teen, length of time under the Learnfare school attendance requirement, school exemptions under Learnfare, and differences in Learnfare participation patterns by age and teen parentage. The analysis also discusses the accuracy of the state's Computer Reporting Network (CRN) system data administering the experiment since this data will be used in drawing the sample populations for hypothesis testing in Milwaukee and the balance of the state and for identifying demographic characteristics of the sample population.

I. Rationale for the Learnfare Experiment

In July, 1987 the State of Wisconsin enacted legislation implementing a "Learnfare" policy for families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). As a condition for receiving AFDC, the Wisconsin law requires teenagers to attend school regularly if they are physically able unless a) they have completed high school or earned a high school equivalency, or b) they are excused from school under the state compulsory attendance law. (1987 Wisconsin Act 27, Section 1014(r)) Governor Tommy G. Thompson informed school administrators, "Learnfare is built on the premise that a high school education is a minimum credential to insure that Wisconsin citizens will be able to provide for themselves and their families." (Thompson to School Administrators, August 21, 1987, p. 1)

The concept of Learnfare was first introduced into Governor Thompson's state budget as a requirement for sixteen and seventeen year old teen mothers receiving AFDC. The Welfare Reform Commission appointed by the Governor made up of the Democratic and Republican party leadership of the state Senate and Assembly recommended expanding Learnfare to all teens on AFDC, both dependents and teen parents. (Cullen et al, Recommendations of the Governor's Welfare Reform Commission, May, 1987) In the closing days of the legislature's debate on the budget, the Joint Committee on Finance deliberations produced a substitute amendment which included the expansion of Learnfare to all teens receiving AFDC. This expanded version passed the Senate. The Assembly subsequently introduced an amendment to limit Learnfare's coverage to teen parents, which was passed by both houses. This change was vetoed out of the bill by Governor Thompson who argued that the policy should apply to all teens receiving AFDC. The Governor also vetoed a provision that would have limited sanctioning of AFDC teens to those who had been given the opportunity to participate in a school program for "Children at Risk" or for "school age parents."

The Learnfare policy has provoked intense debate in Wisconsin. Proponents of the policy support Learnfare as a way to break the cycle of dependency which they believe has become a way of life for a large portion of the AFDC population. Recognizing that a high school education is becoming increasingly essential for employment at an income sufficient to support a family, Learnfare mandates a financial reason for families to place a priority on their teens securing that education. The policy assumes that welfare recipients, even those with compounding social problems, are able to insure their children's school attendance and expects this behavior as a condition for the AFDC grant. The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) described this "social contract" approach to the provision of government assistance for needy families in the federal waiver request for Learnfare submitted to the federal government. Although federal legislation for mandatory welfare work programs and other employment and training initiatives for AFDC recipients generally targeted the parents, DHSS argued that the "social contract" should apply to youth receiving assistance as well and that parents should be held accountable for their youths' actions. The Department stated,

> This approach [Learnfare] will establish the policy principle that the receipt of assistance creates an expectation that recipients actively participate in establishing their own independence and extends that expectation to include teenage recipients. For adults, cooperation with employment and training programs is expected. For teens, school attendance is the appropriate equivalent of adult work and should be treated as seriously as work. The school requirement for all teen members of AFDC households between 13 and 18 years old will permit the state to give the teens a clearly understandable and monetarily tangible reason to pursue their education. (DHSS, Wisconsin Welfare Reform Package Section 1115(a) Waiver Application, p. 10)

The state argued that the Learnfare requirement used along with school and social services programs would insure that youth regularly attend school.

> Obviously, in and of itself, it [the Learnfare requirement] may not be sufficient to motivate a teen to continue schooling. However, used in conjunction with a wide range of school and social service programs, it should increase the overall effectiveness of the state's efforts to educate these children. This should reduce the likelihood of their future welfare dependence. (Waiver, p. 10)

The Wisconsin waiver package specifically addressed the issue of requiring school attendance of eighteen and nineteen-year-old teen parents.

> The rationale for requiring all underage teens to remain in school also applies to the young adults who have not achieved high school graduation or its equivalent. The need is, if anything, even greater among young adults who are pregnant or already parents and living on AFDC. School attendance for this group will reduce future dependency. It also reflects the reality that many young people, especially those who have lost school time because of pregnancy and childbirth, do not graduate until they are 19 or 20. Requiring teen parents to continue after the eighteenth birthday also puts an emphasis on educational attainment rather than simply attending school. (Waiver, p. 14)

Opponents of Learnfare argue that the policy is punitive, unfairly targets only low-income families, causes economic hardships on families who cannot control their teenagers, and fails to address the causes for teens' failures in school. They warn that the Learnfare policy applied without consideration to the social service needs of the family and educational problems of the teen, allows teens to blackmail their parents, contributes to increased family tension and child abuse, and deprives sanctioned families of necessary funds to care for their children. Some opponents argue that by expanding Learnfare from a modest-sized program for teen mothers to a statewide effort for all AFDC teens, the state reduced its ability to effectively intervene to address the educational needs of teenage mothers.

Some supporters of Learnfare and the Department of Health and Social Services maintain that existing administrative data on the percentages of students who are not sanctioned already proves that Learnfare "works." Some opponents say Learnfare is a failure and cite the record high 1988-89 school year dropout rates and lower daily attendance rates in Milwaukee Public Schools as evidence that Learnfare is not inducing urban AFDC teens to attend school regularly. The purpose of the Learnfare evaluation (described in detail below) is to provide quantitative data testing the hypotheses that Learnfare has a positive impact on AFDC teens' school enrollment, attendance, performance and completion rates and reduces the incidence of teen pregnancy. These hypotheses will be tested utilizing AFDC teens and non-AFDC teen populations as non-equivalent control groups in pre-post and time series analysis of school performance. The evaluation will also provide qualitative

information describing "the implementation of Learnfare and its impact on AFDC recipient families, school districts, and school-linked day care resources." (RFP, p. 24)

II. Brief Description of the Learnfare Policy and Programs

Under Wisconsin's Learnfare policy all AFDC teenagers (ages thirteen through nineteen) who are parents or living with a natural or adoptive parent are required to attend school regularly until they graduate or earn a high school equivalency credential. At the time of a family's application for AFDC or at the family's six month AFDC review, the county income maintenance worker handling the case is expected to inquire whether each teenager is in school and to collect school attendance records from the parent or the teen's school. The attendance of all AFDC teens subject to the Learnfare school attendance requirement is monitored for each semester.

Teens are placed on monthly monitoring of their school attendance if they have ten or more full days of unexcused absences in a semester or who cannot provide attendance records. Each month these teens' school districts are asked to provide information on the number of unexcused absences incurred by each teen. If the number of full days of unexcused absences exceeds two for any teen, the family of that teen is notified that its AFDC check will be reduced. Teens who have dropped out of school or fail to provide evidence of school enrollment are sanctioned each month until they attend school for a complete month with fewer than three unexcused absences. The amount of a "sanctioned" family's AFDC grant reduction is determined by subtracting the "sanctioned" teen from the number of persons in the family eligible for AFDC. In cases where the teenager is the casehead, only her children are counted for the AFDC grant for the months when the teenager fails to meet the Learnfare requirement.

In order to assist teen parents to return to school, the legislature provided funds for day care services that are either licensed by DHSS, certified by county agencies, or established by local school boards. (If relatives are paid for day care, they must meet certification standards.) The state also provided funds for transportation of the teen parent's child(ren) to and from the day care facility. In October, 1988 the state began paying educational costs for some eighteen and nineteen year old teen parents who were not attending regular high schools. This program was administered through the Work Experience and Job Training/Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program offices and later began using state desegregation appropriations for Milwaukee Public Schools as well as other state and federal funds.

III. Subpopulations Affected by the Learnfare Experiment

During the sixteen month period from September, 1988 (when the Learnfare requirement first applied to all aged teens) through December, 1989, a total of 53,242 teenagers were receiving AFDC either as teen parents or as teen dependents living with one or both of their natural or adoptive parents.[1] (The Learnfare policy excludes those dependent teens receiving AFDC who do not live with a natural or adoptive parent and who are not parents themselves. The following analysis does not include these youth.) The characteristics of this population and their reported Learnfare experiences were examined to determine the information available statewide on the AFDC teen population subject to Learnfare. The evaluators were promised copies of existing computerized records on teens receiving AFDC prior to the Learnfare experiment by January 1, 1990 but as of January 1, 1991 all of these tapes had not been delivered.

Although the data on the Learnfare status of teens on AFDC does not provide information necessary to measure the outcomes of Learnfare, it can be used as an aid in defining the population to be studied and tracking the status of participants for AFDC check-writing purposes. This data file identifies those teens receiving AFDC prior to the implementation of the Learnfare experiment, those teens subject to Learnfare requirements or exempt from those requirements during the experimental period, and teens whose families were sanctioned during the Learnfare experiment. It also helps define critical subpopulations for hypothesis testing.

It has become an unfortunate Wisconsin pastime to search for a single number that captures the experience of AFDC teens under the Learnfare policy. The Employment and Training Institute's March, 1990 report on The Impact of Learnfare on Milwaukee County Social Service Clients included a statistic that twenty-eight percent of Milwaukee County AFDC teens sanctioned for poor attendance or as dropouts under Learnfare during a sixteen month study period were reported in school with regular attendance two months after their last sanction. Some Learnfare critics have cited the twenty-eight percent figure as evidence of Learnfare's failure. DHSS staff have claimed that on average ninety-two percent of Learnfare teens are "attending school regularly or have a legitimate reason for not being there." We believe that reliance upon one or two percentages drawn from the state's computerized administrative file to judge the complex experiences under Learnfare is ill-advised. First, as discussed in this report (see pp. 26-28) the fields used to determine school status and Learnfare participation are still being corrected for errors. AFDC school status codes have serious limitations with practices reportedly varying even within counties for collecting and coding school enrollment and attendance and have been in a constant state of flux in Milwaukee County where

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[1] The total includes dependent teens ages thirteen through eighteen and teen parents ages thirteen through nineteen years and ten months. The evaluators followed the procedures used by the DHSS Bureau of Systems Support excluding teen parents in the last two months before they turn twenty from the "Learnfare-covered" teen population.

policies governing the codes are refined through administrative fair hearing decisions and more recently, responses to the federal court injunction prohibiting the sanctioning of teens in Milwaukee. Also, we have yet to generate the baseline data on the historical school experience (completion rates, credits earned, attendance patterns) of AFDC teens prior to the Learnfare experience. This data is only available from individual student records in the local school districts. Finally, just as the experiences of adults on AFDC have ranged from long-term dependence of five or more years to short-term participation during bouts of unemployment, the subpopulations used for hypothesis testing in the Learnfare evaluation will require careful attention and analysis.

A. Demographics of Teens on AFDC

The population of teen parents and dependent teens living with at least one parent and receiving AFDC during the sixteen month period from September, 1988 through December, 1989 included 22,241 males and 30,995 females. See the attached graphs.

Table 1:

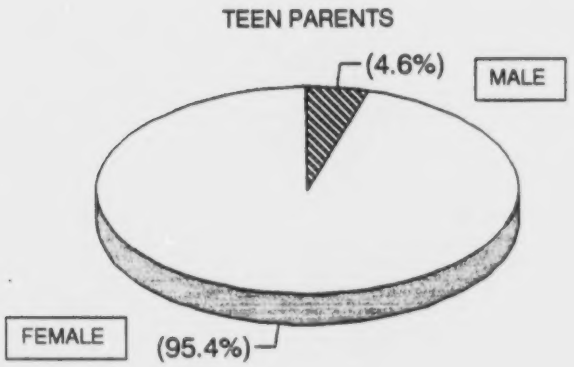
SEX OF LEARNFARE-AGE TEEN PARENTS AND DEPENDENT TEENS
(September, 1988 through December, 1989)

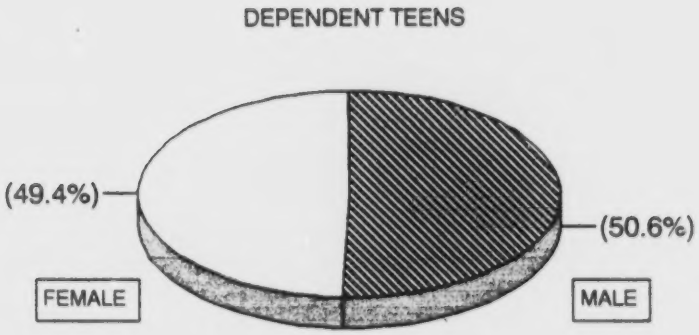
Sex	Teen Parents	% of Total	Depend. Teens	% of Total	All Teens*	% of Total
Male	530	5%	21,745	51%	22,241	42%
Female	10,934	95	21,200	49	30,995	58
TOTAL	11,464	100%	42,945	100%	53,236	100%

Note: The total does not include dependent teens on AFDC who are living with foster parents or a non-legally related relative.
* Six persons with no code provided for sex are included in the total. 1,173 teen dependents who became parents during the study period are included as both teen parents and dependent teens.

Racial/ethnic data is only collected for the casehead applying for AFDC. Using the race of the casehead as an estimate of the race of the teen shows the following breakdown by race of teens on AFDC. The following categories are used on the welfare application form: white (not of Hispanic origin), black (not of Hispanic origin), Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Hispanic. Caseheads with missing codes are shown under "other" in the Table 2.

SEX OF LEARNFARE-AGE TEENS
SEPTEMBER 1988 THROUGH DECEMBER 1989

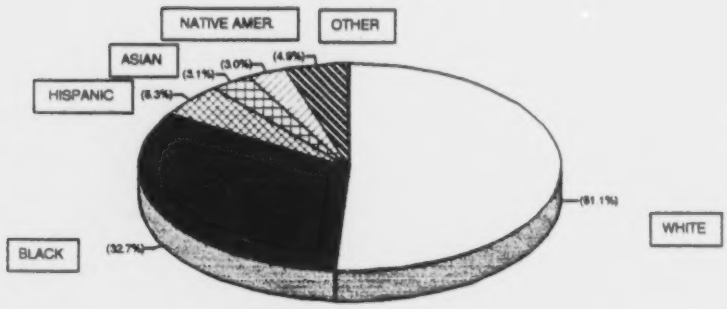




RACE OF CASEHEAD OF LEARNFARE-AGE TEENS

SEPTEMBER 1988 THROUGH DECEMBER 1989

TEEN PARENTS



DEPENDENT TEENS

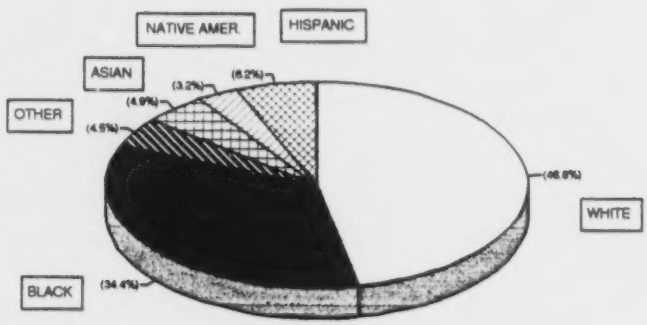


Table 2:

RACE OF CASEHEAD OF TEEN PARENTS AND DEPENDENT TEENS
(September, 1988 through December, 1989)

Race of Casehead	Teen Parents	% of Total	Depend. Teens	% of Total	All Teens*	% of Total
White	5,856	51%	20,120	47%	25,633	48%
Black	3,744	33	14,766	34	17,892	34
Hispanic	606	5	2,664	6	3,190	6
Asian	358	3	2,091	5	2,420	4
Native Am.	342	3	1,367	3	1,668	3
Other	558	5	1,943	5	2,439	5
TOTAL	11,464	100%	42,951	100%	53,242	100%

* 1,173 teen dependents who became teen parents during the study period are included in both columns.

B. Length of Time on AFDC as a Teen

A critical variable for the Learnfare evaluation is the length of time an AFDC teen was on AFDC and possibly subject to the experiment. The length of time families remain on AFDC varies widely. The teen AFDC population in Wisconsin includes youth from families on very long-term dependence and others who use AFDC over a relatively short period. In addition, the Learnfare experiment itself may affect the length of time youth, particularly teen parents, remain in AFDC.

The following charts show the patterns of numbers of months that teens receiving AFDC at the beginning of the 1988-89 school year remained on AFDC during the next fifteen months. Thirteen year old teens were far more likely to remain on AFDC than older teens, particularly seventeen year olds. Of the 6,485 thirteen year olds on AFDC at the start of the 1988-89 school year, over half were on AFDC for all sixteen months.

By contrast to the thirteen year olds about a third of the 5,060 sixteen year olds on AFDC at the start of the 1988-89 school year were on AFDC grants for all sixteen months, and less than ten percent of the 4,448 seventeen year olds remained on aid all sixteen months. This is due in part to the federal requirement that eighteen year old dependents are eligible for AFDC only if they have not completed high school and are currently enrolled in a school program leading to a high school degree. As a result, many dependents who were seventeen in September, 1988 lost their eligibility for AFDC ("aged out") during the sixteen month period by virtue of reaching age eighteen and having either graduated from high school or dropped out of school. Older teen parents were far less likely to continue to receive AFDC grants than younger

teen parents. The following tables analyze the duration on AFDC of teen parents and dependent teens for the entire sixteen month period from September, 1988 through December, 1989.

Table 3:

PERCENT OF TEEN PARENTS ON AFDC ALL SIXTEEN MONTHS
(of Teen Parents on AFDC, September, 1988)

Age - Sept. 1988	Total Teen Parents*	Number on AFDC All 16 Months	Percent on AFDC All 16 Months
13 years	23	16	69.6%
14 "	58	25	43.1
15 "	118	50	42.4
16 "	375	108	28.8
17 "	974	224	23.0

* Includes dependent teens who became teen parents during the 16 month period.

Table 4:

PERCENT OF DEPENDENT TEENS ON AFDC ALL SIXTEEN MONTHS
(of Teen Parents on AFDC in September, 1988)

Age - Sept. 1988	Total Teen Dependents*	Number on AFDC All 16 Months	Percent on AFDC All 16 Months
13 years	6,462	3,475	53.8%
14 "	5,660	2,941	52.0
15 "	5,162	2,563	49.7
16 "	4,685	1,710	36.5
17 "	3,474	154	4.4

* Does not include dependent teens who became parents during the 16 month period or dependent teens living with someone other than their parents.

In addition to the teen parents and teen dependents who remained on aid for the entire sixteen months reviewed, other teens received AFDC for only a few months, and still others received aid, only to leave and later return to welfare dependency. The Learnfare experiment is further complicated for analysis purposes given its application only to youth in their teenage years (ages thirteen through eighteen for dependent youth, and ages thirteen through nineteen for teen parents). This population included: 8,793 children who turned thirteen at some point during the sixteen month period, older dependent

teens who left AFDC upon turning eighteen or graduating during their eighteenth year, teens who became parents and applied for aid as caseheads, older teen parents who turned nineteen during the period, as well as teens whose families became self-sufficient or for other reasons left aid during the study period and returned or did not return in later months. The number of months each teen was both receiving AFDC and in the teenage years covered by the Learnfare policy are shown below for the sixteen month period and on the graphs by age of teens in September, 1988.

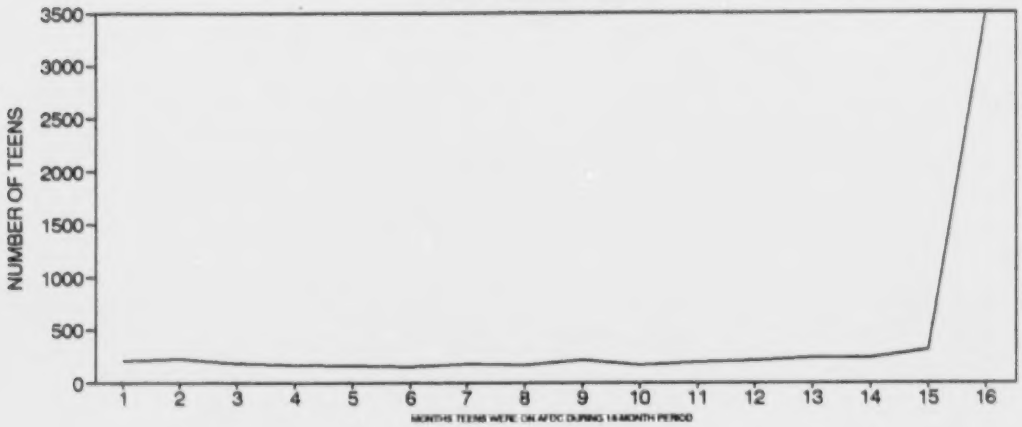
Table 5:

MONTHS ON AFDC AS TEEN DURING SIXTEEN MONTH PERIOD

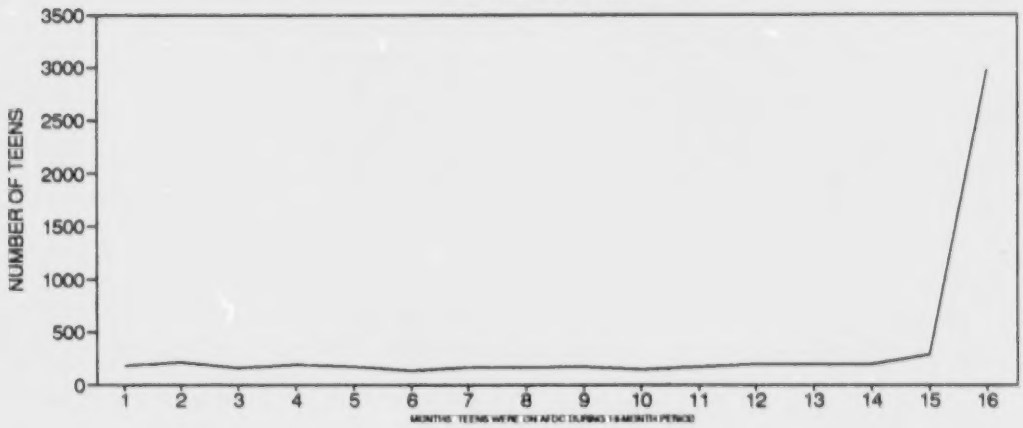
Months	Number of Teens	Percent of Total
1 month	3,654	6.9%
2 months	4,047	7.6
3 "	3,914	7.4
4 "	3,484	6.5
5 "	3,053	5.7
6 "	2,952	5.6
7 "	2,538	4.8
8 "	2,527	4.8
9 "	2,471	4.6
10 "	2,209	4.1
11 "	2,042	3.8
12 "	2,047	3.8
13 "	1,970	3.7
14 "	1,990	3.7
15 "	2,530	4.8
16 "	11,814	22.2
TOTAL	53,242	100.0%

Table 5 includes 11,814 teens (22 percent of the total) on AFDC as teens for all sixteen months and 41,428 (78 percent) on for fewer than sixteen months. Forty percent of the teens (21,400) entered after the first month. Forty-six percent (24,650) left AFDC or "aged out" of Learnfare before the sixteenth month. A group of 7,948 teens (15 percent of all teens) entered after the first month and left before the sixteenth month. Another group of 3,326 teens (6 percent of the total) were enrolled in both the first and the sixteenth month but not in all of the months in between.

THIRTEEN YEAR OLD TEENS ON AID
SEPTEMBER 1988



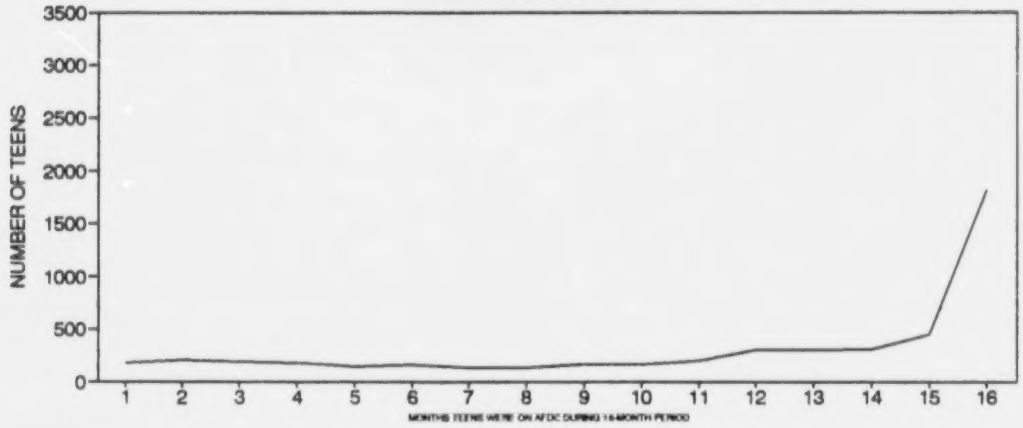
FOURTEEN YEAR OLD TEENS ON AID
SEPTEMBER 1988



FIFTEEN YEAR OLD TEENS ON AID
SEPTEMBER 1988

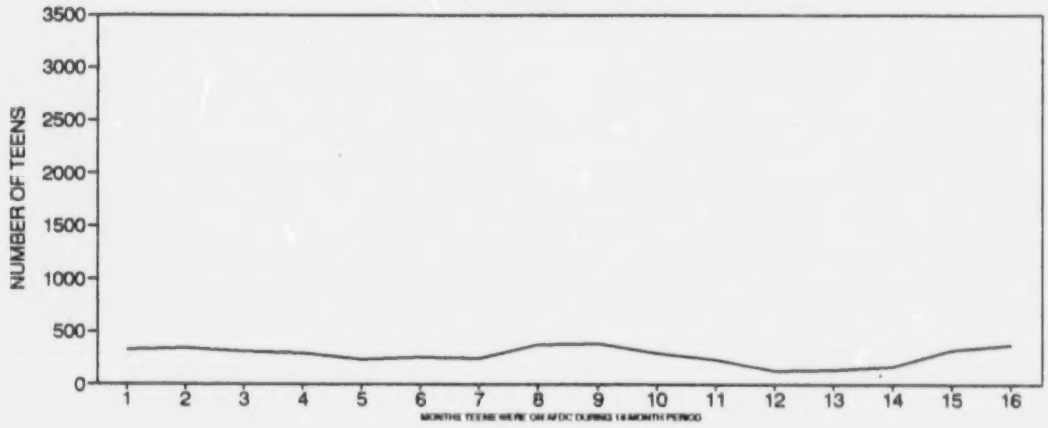
SIXTEEN YEAR OLD TEENS ON AID

SEPTEMBER 1988



SEVENTEEN YEAR OLD TEENS ON AID

SEPTEMBER 1988



C. Teens on AFDC and Under the Learnfare School Attendance Requirement

As explained in the narrative on the institutional implementation of Learnfare, only certain portions of the teen population are required to attend school under Learnfare. Teens coded as high school graduates or GED completers are exempt. Many teens are exempt on either a temporary or a permanent basis. In addition, other teens (including youth turning thirteen, teens with miscodes, and some teens whose enrollment or attendance is under review) may not be subject to sanctioning in a given month or a series of months. During the sixteen month period from September, 1988 through December, 1989, 53,242 teenagers received AFDC. The number of teenagers monitored for school enrollment in a given month (or on a semester basis) varied during the sixteen month period. The evaluators identified those teens required to be in school and subject to sanctioning for at least one month. Computer codes included in this group were students whose attendance was monitored on a semester or monthly basis, teens reported not enrolled in school who are sanctioned for the month as dropouts, and teens with missing school enrollment data who are sanctioned for failure to report their school data. For purposes of the evaluation months with these codes are considered months teens are "under the Learnfare school attendance requirements." Table 6 below shows the number of months teen parents were subject to the school enrollment and attendance requirements of Learnfare.

Some teens may be in school with good attendance, in school with poor attendance, or dropouts although the state's Computer Reporting Network (CRN) system does not record this for the month. These teens are expected to be in school but CRN records are not available for their school experience that month. This group includes teens who have been recorded as "unverified," a computer code which sends a request to the teen's school for a semester and month check on enrollment and numbers of full days of unexcused absences. This code may be used at the time of each six-month review for teens who are enrolled in school and do not bring verification of attendance to the review. Given that it is a temporary code, the student should be shown in school in the following, and often preceding, months. However, during the study period, some students retained the code for a number of months. The school status of other teens has been recorded as "not found" because the casehead failed to provide the name of the school the teen was attending or that school did not show the teen as enrolled. The casehead is given an opportunity to verify school enrollment within a ten day period after notification. Again, this code should be temporary, but it sometimes continues for a number of months. Finally, this group includes younger teens coded as "children under age 13" until the first six-month review in a month after their thirteenth birthday. School records are not reviewed for enrollment or attendance until this code is replaced with a Learnfare status code.

Table 6:

MONTHS AFDC TEENS ARE MONITORED FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE UNDER LEARNFARE
(September, 1988 through December, 1989)

Number of Months Monitored Under the Learnfare School Attendance Requirement*	Number of Teen Dependents	Number of Teen Parents**
None	7,265	7,084
1 month	2,576	634
2 months	2,746	596
3 "	2,648	529
4 "	2,322	430
5 months	1,987	339
6 "	1,936	334
7 "	1,863	299
8 "	1,905	241
9 months	1,728	191
10 "	1,541	199
11 "	1,339	135
12 "	1,452	137
13 months	1,521	103
14 "	1,839	87
15 "	3,070	78
16 "	5,213	48
TOTAL	42,951	11,464

* The totals include months teens were coded as ST (student on semester monitoring), MO (students on monthly monitoring), SA (sanctioned for poor attendance, as a dropout, or for failure to provide school information). Totals do not include months teens were coded as CH (children under age 13), UV (unverified), NF (school not found), or exempt from Learnfare or Workfare. The totals do not include months youth were on AFDC before or after their teenage years.

** Months shown for teen parents are only for the time the teen was a parent.

D. Differences in Learnfare Participation: Teen Parents and Dependents

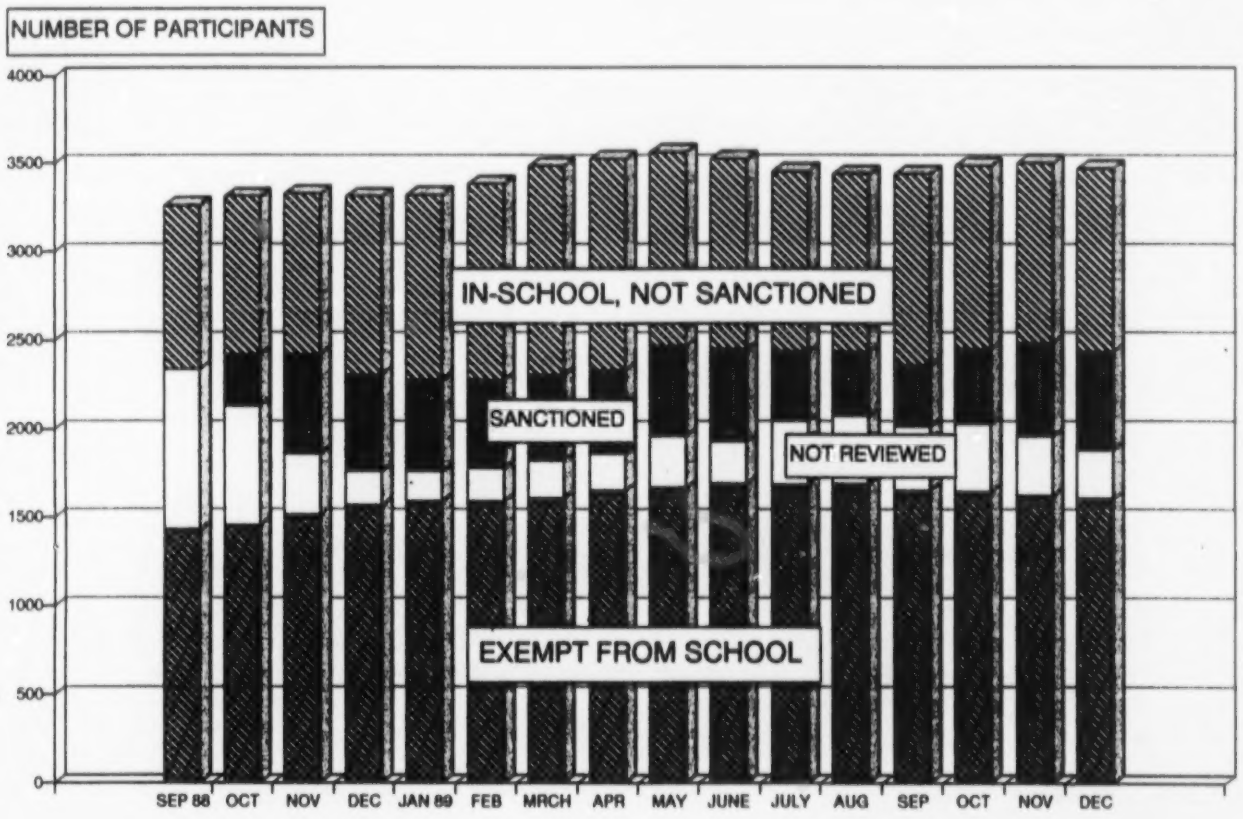
The Family Support Act specifically targets teen mothers as a priority population for service, as did the original legislation proposing Learnfare. Several of the exemptions from school attendance under the Learnfare policy are applicable only to teen parents, e.g. exemption to care for an infant under three months of age and exemption for inability to obtain day care for one's child(ren).

A number of teen parents are exempt from school attendance under Learnfare, but not necessarily under compulsory school attendance laws, because they are lacking school credits and are "not expected to graduate by age twenty." Teen parents coded as non-graduates are far less likely to be required to attend school under the Learnfare policy than teen dependents in AFDC households. Nearly half (47 percent) of the teen parents coded as non-graduates are exempt from school attendance, compared to about two percent of teen dependents. Subsequent analysis will need to examine the reasons why so many teenage parents are exempt from school and whether they receive any educational training under the Work Experience and Job Training Program.

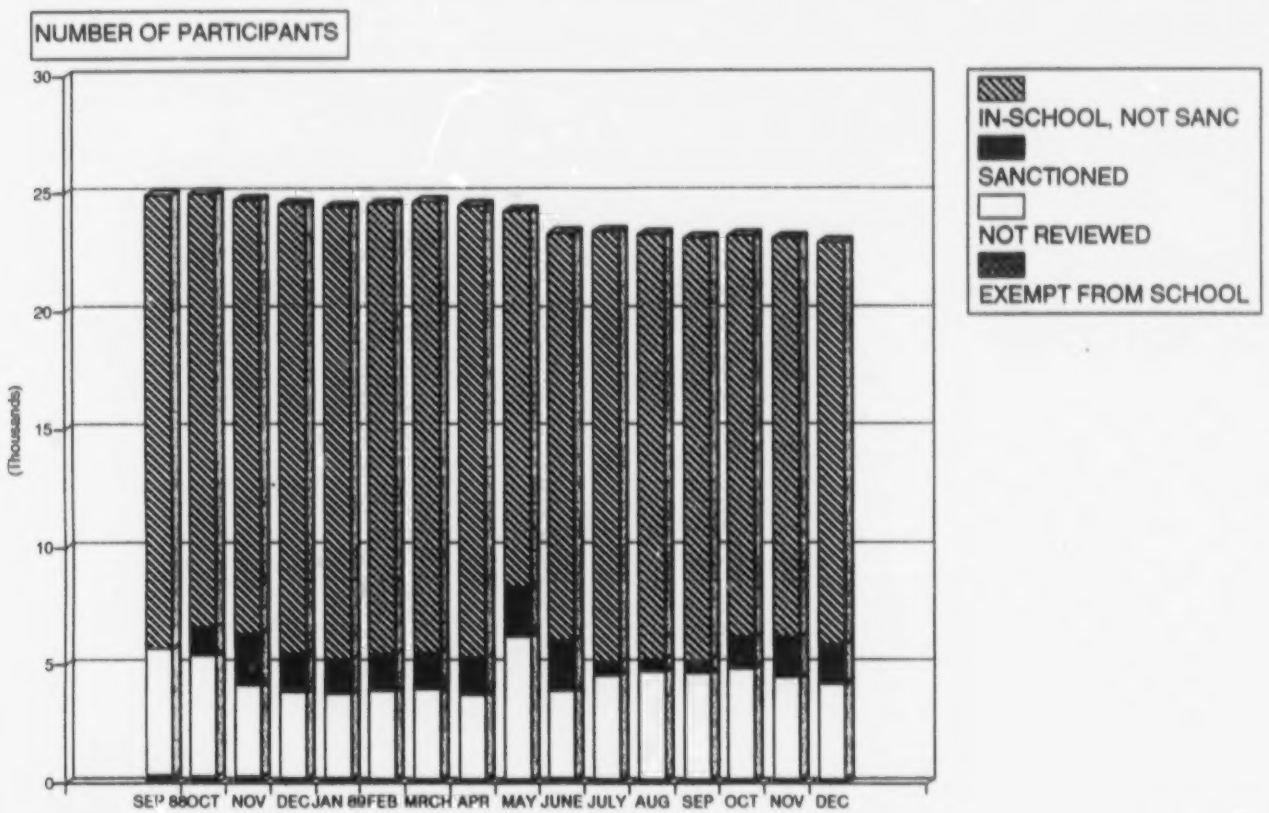
The following graphs show the number of teen parents and teen dependents under the Learnfare requirement in each of the sixteen months between September, 1988 and December, 1989. More teen parents on AFDC are coded as graduates in the rural counties of the state, compared to the urban counties. In December, 1989, thirty-eight percent of teen parents in rural counties (counties which are not included in a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, SMSA) were coded as high school graduates, compared to twenty-six percent for Milwaukee County, and thirty-three percent for the other urban counties. The rate of exempting high school non-completers from school under Learnfare was also highest in the rural counties, where fifty-two percent of the teen parents coded as non-graduates were exempted from the school attendance requirement, compared to forty-six percent for both Milwaukee County and the other urban counties.

Very few teen dependents are exempt from Learnfare in urban or rural areas of the state. The proportion of in-school dependent teens on monthly rather than semester monitoring is half that of Milwaukee County, ten percent compared to twenty percent. The rate for the other urban counties falls in between -- fourteen percent.

LEARNFARE STATUS OF TEEN PARENTS CODED AS NON-GRADUATES



LEARNFARE STATUS OF DEPENDENT TEENS CODED AS NON-GRADUATES



E. Description of the Learnfare Sanctioned Population

Teen parents under the Learnfare school attendance requirements and subject to sanctions are far more likely to be sanctioned than teen dependents. The sanction rate for teen parents under the Learnfare school attendance requirement and subject to sanction reached a high of thirty-eight percent in November of 1989 and averaged thirty-one percent for the fifteen months during which sanctions were imposed from October 1988 through December 1989. The sanction rate for those dependent teens under the Learnfare attendance requirement and subject to sanctions reached a high of twelve percent in May, 1989 and averaged eight percent for the fifteen months when sanctions were imposed (including the summer months when only dropouts and teens failing to report their school of attendance were sanctioned). Table 7 shows the percent of teen parents and dependent teens sanctioned out of those monitored for school attendance under Learnfare.

Table 7:

PERCENT OF TEENS SANCTIONED OUT OF THOSE MONITORED FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE UNDER LEARNFARE*

Month	Percent of Teen Parents Sanctioned Out of Those Monitored	Percent of Dependent Teens Sanctioned Out of Those Monitored
September, 1988**	--	--
October	25%	6%
November	38	11
December	35	8
January, 1989	33	7
February	31	8
March	29	8
April	28	8
May	32	12
June	33	11
July***	28	3
August***	26	3
September***	25	3
October	29	8
November	34	9
December	35	9

* Teens are considered monitored in a month if they have an ST, MO, or SA code, but not for UV, NF, or CH codes.
** Teens were not sanctioned in September, 1988.
*** No teens were sanctioned for attendance during the summer months (with a one month time delay). For those months, teens are given an "in-school" code. 102 sanctions for attendance during these months are either delayed sanctions from the Spring, miscodes, or in error.

Table 8 provides a breakdown of teens sanctioned by sex for teen parents and dependent teens. As noted earlier, the race of teens is not identified on the welfare application form unless they are caseheads. Table 9 shows the race of the casehead for teens sanctioned under Learnfare.

Table 8:

SEX OF TEENS SANCTIONED UNDER LEARNFARE
(September, 1988 through December, 1989)

Sex	Teen Parents	% of Total	Depend. Teens	% of Total	All Teens	% of Total
Male	66	3.1%	3,592	51.9%	3,654	41.0%
Female	2,087	96.9	3,331	48.1	5,262	59.0
TOTAL	2,153	100.0	6,925*	100.0	8,918**	100.0

* Includes two teen dependents whose sex is not coded.
** Includes 160 teen parents who were also sanctioned as teen dependents.

Table 9:

RACE OF CASEHEAD OF TEENS SANCTIONED UNDER LEARNFARE
(September, 1988 through December, 1989)

Race of Casehead	Teen Parents	% of Total	Depend. Teens	% of Total	All Teens	% of Total
White	675	31.3%	1,752	25.3%	2,411	27.0%
Black	1,135	52.7	3,952	57.1	4,965	55.7
Hispanic	146	6.8	625	9.0	762	9.5
Asian	19	0.9	60	0.9	78	0.9
Native Am.	67	3.1	190	2.7	254	2.9
Other	111	5.2	346	5.0	448	5.0
TOTAL	2,153	100.0%	6,925	100.0	8,918*	100.0

*Includes 160 teen parents who were also sanctioned as dependents.

IV. Institutional Implementation of Learnfare

Wisconsin's Learnfare policy was the first in the country to require nearly all AFDC teens to attend school regularly as a condition for inclusion in their family's AFDC grant. The policy had the strong support of Republican Governor Thompson and his newly appointed Secretary of Health and Social Services Timothy Cullen, former Democratic majority leader of the state Senate. The Governor made welfare reform a priority for his administration and gave his full support to an immediate implementation of the Learnfare policy. The July, 1987 legislation approving Learnfare authorized the department to use the "emergency rules" procedures in order to implement Learnfare immediately in the Fall of 1987. After several months of confrontation between the Joint Committee for Review of Legislative Rules and DHSS, rules were promulgated for the policy. The philosophy of DHSS in implementing the Learnfare policy was expressed later by Secretary Cullen,

> Because this is the first program of its kind anywhere in the nation, we have no previous experience to work from. We must be flexible in implementation and address problems as they arise to assure that our program is a success and can be used as a model around the country. (Cullen to County Social Services Directors, March 1, 1988)

The Fall, 1987 deadline for Learnfare implementation proved impossible to meet, although AFDC recipients were informed of the policy during this period and funds for day care and transportation to and from day care were made available to teen parents. Beginning in November, 1987, as clients applied for AFDC or met with county staff for the required six-month review of existing AFDC cases, the income maintenance workers explained the Learnfare policy and updated school codes and the work program codes (now work program and Learnfare status codes) necessary to administer the program.

By agreement, the Learnfare policy was phased in with all teen parents (ages thirteen through nineteen) but only thirteen and fourteen year old dependents subject to sanctioning in the Spring. (In February, 1988, DHSS and county staff personally contacted teens coded as non-graduates and dropouts to explain the policy. The sanctioning began in May, 1988 based on March, 1988 attendance records.) In September, 1988, all AFDC teens, including fifteen through eighteen year old dependents were required to meet the Learnfare policies. (In summer, 1988, staff contacted dependent teens ages fifteen through eighteen who were coded as non-graduates and not in school.)

In Wisconsin the operation of AFDC programs is handled at the local government level by the seventy-two county departments of social services and five of the Indian tribal agencies. While DHSS has control over the income maintenance operations of county governments administering AFDC, food stamps and medical assistance programs, in the past it had little or no contact with local school districts. With the advent of Learnfare, the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services initiated a series of administrative rules regarding verification of AFDC teens' school enrollment and attendance which affected not only county departments but local school districts as well.

Part of the appeal of the Learnfare policy is its apparent simplicity. Teenagers must attend school or lose their eligibility for public assistance. However, the administration of the policy is quite complex. First, the policy requires the cooperation of all seventy-two counties and five of the tribal agencies with which it contracts for administration of public welfare and requires school reports from most of the state's 429 local elementary and secondary school districts; at least four of the state's sixteen Vocational, Technical and Adult Education (VTAE) districts serving older teens; private schools and programs enrolling AFDC teens; and even schools in other states that the teens attended prior to applying for AFDC in Wisconsin. It requires administrative procedures which during a sixteen month period attempted to track the grade level, school enrollment, and attendance records of over 50,000 youth in the state. Finally, the policy requires school staff to distinguish between excused and unexcused school absences. Income maintenance staff may be asked to decide whether individual school absences are justified under the "good cause" reasons identified by the state and are also responsible for determining whether teenagers should be exempt from school attendance under Learnfare for longer periods of time or permanently. Learnfare's enforcement consequently requires individual judgments by hundreds of local school teachers and county income maintenance workers.

A. Determination of Learnfare Status by Income Maintenance Workers

The essence of the Learnfare policy is to insure that students are enrolled in school and then to periodically monitor their daily attendance. When teens miss school without acceptable excuses, the policy is designed to insure that within a short period of time their families are punished with "sanctions," that is reductions in the families' AFDC checks. The Learnfare policy applies to all teen parents (ages thirteen through nineteen) receiving AFDC and those dependent teens (ages thirteen through eighteen) who are living with at least one of their natural or adoptive parents. Secretary Cullen explained the rationale for excluding children living with non-legally responsible relatives or foster parents.

> Current statutory language applies the Learnfare requirement to all teens receiving AFDC under s.49.19, Stats. This includes those teens residing in foster homes with relatives who are not legally responsible for their care. While we feel it is essential for children in these living situations to attend school, it is not our intent to deny payment to the families caring for these teens, if they fail to meet Learnfare attendance requirements. We believe imposition of Learnfare sanctions to teens residing with persons who are not legally responsible for their care could likely result in the caretaker's refusal to continue care for the teenager, in which case he or she may end up in a less desirable living situation. (Cullen to Plewa and Antaramian, January 6, 1988, pp. 1-2)

The work of determining the Learnfare status and present and prior school experience of AFDC teens was assigned to county income maintenance workers. Since the 1970s the functions of welfare administration have been separated between social workers and other social service staff providing non-financial assistance to clients, and income maintenance staff who specialize in eligibility determination and recertification for federal aid programs. In Wisconsin income maintenance workers, called family assistance workers in Milwaukee and recently renamed economic support specialists, use a thirty-page Combined Application Form to solicit information from persons applying for AFDC, food stamps, and/or medical assistance. Background information is collected on each household member or case member regarding demographic characteristics, employment, income, assets, relationship to the casehead or the casehead's spouse (or parent of the casehead's children), number of vehicles owned, insurance, etc. The data from the application form is entered into the state's on-line Computer Reporting Network system and used to determine each case and household member's eligibility for aid, record monthly changes in each client's status after application, determine the amount of monthly checks to the case, and enter special actions for clients with non-routine situations.

Clients are required to report to their income maintenance worker whenever there are changes in their family composition or economic status, and each month income maintenance workers document changes for entry into the state's on-line computer system. Every six months the casehead is required to meet with the income maintenance worker to review the status of all persons in the case. (In Milwaukee County every other six-month review may be handled by mail rather than in person.) Income maintenance workers maintain loose leaf manuals of instruction. (In Fall, 1990 the manual for the CRN system alone totaled 639 pages. The AFDC manual was 299 pages.) Whenever there are changes in state or federal policy or program administration, income maintenance workers receive new instructions to replace existing sheets in their manuals.

To avoid revising the entire CRN system, several existing data fields were modified to incorporate codes necessary for enforcement of the Learnfare school policy. The Learnfare policy requires data on each youth's age, relationship to the casehead (teens must be teen parents or sons or daughters of the casehead or the casehead's spouse or parent of the casehead's children), and school status. The welfare application form already required the following information on the school status of each person in the household: highest grade completed; whether the person was in school full time, part time, or not in-school; and the name of the school and school district where the person was enrolled. These fields were not often updated after a case's initial application, since they were not essential to the determination of the amount of the AFDC grant. With the advent of Learnfare income maintenance workers were instructed to update the school information on teens at each six-month review.

The actual Learnfare status code for each teen was entered into an existing field for adult's work program status. New codes were created for this field for the administration of Learnfare although some existing "good

cause" codes already in use for the work program were also identified as Learnfare codes. Income maintenance workers were directed to recode the school district as "9990" whenever a teen was permanently excused from school under Learnfare. However, because this code has not been consistently used, in many cases it is not possible to determine whether a teen is temporarily exempt from school under Learnfare or permanently exempt from school and temporarily exempt from the work experience and job training program.

DHSS divided the teen population was subdivided into groups in order to expedite the cooperation of the local school districts, to reduce the error rate due to the extremely large volume of youth monitored each month, and to insure that most teens not meeting the Learnfare policies experience immediate consequences. Income maintenance workers were instructed essentially to divide the teen population into five groups.

1. The first group comprised those teens who reported that they had completed twelve years of schooling or earned a high school equivalency credential. This group was exempt from the Learnfare requirement and assigned to the AFDC welfare employment program.

2. The second group, also excluded from the Learnfare requirement, comprised those teens who met one of the "good cause" reasons for not attending school. These included

- teen mothers caring for babies under three months of age,
- teen mothers who could not find appropriate day care for their child(ren),
- students with an expulsion pending,
- teens deemed incapacitated,
- teens with transportation not available to school or living too remote from school, and
- teens excused from school for religious reasons.

These teens are required to return to school once the reason for their "good cause" exemption ceases. Permanent exemptions from school were granted to sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen year olds under a DHSS provision that exempted from the Learnfare school attendance requirement teens "the school district determines that . . . will not graduate by age twenty." (See page 29 for a discussion of the inconsistencies of this provision and the state's current compulsory school attendance law.) Under federal law, however, eighteen year old <u>dependent</u> teens who leave high school or graduate lose their eligibility for AFDC.

3. The third group includes those teens coded as non-graduates who had fewer than ten unexcused absences in the prior semester. These teens are required to attend school regularly under Learnfare. They are considered students with good attendance and their attendance is reviewed on a semester basis at the six-month AFDC review.

4. The fourth group, also required to attend school regularly, includes those teens coded as non-graduates who had ten or more full days of unexcused

absences in the prior semester or could not produce proof of their last semester's attendance. These teens are placed on monthly monitoring, which means that their school is contacted each month for information on the number of full days of unexcused absences they have incurred. (Until November, 1990 the state recommended placing AFDC teens from out of state on monthly monitoring when their school records were unavailable and they could not provide proof of regular school attendance for the prior semester.) For any months AFDC teens on monthly monitoring have more than two full days of unexcused absences their family is sanctioned.

5. Teens in the fifth and last group, teens coded as non-graduates who are not in school or who do not provide proof of school enrollment when the local school reports them not enrolled, are sanctioned for each month they remain out of school or fail to document their school enrollment. (A small residual group of teens retain codes of "unverified" or school "not found" for months at a time, but are not sanctioned.)

The financial penalty for failure to meet the Learnfare requirement is most severe for teen parents who are in a case only with their child or for a parent whose only child on aid is a sanctioned teen. As the family size increases, the financial loss for the case with a teen sanctioned under Learnfare is lessened. For cases in which the teenager is the only dependent in the family, initially the state provided the casehead with a caretaker-only grant for up to three months the first time the teen was sanctioned, in part to allow the parent time to work with the teen to encourage regular school attendance. (The grant was supported with 100 percent state funding.) After the three month period if the teen had not returned to school or was not attending school regularly, the family was deemed ineligible for AFDC. With the passage of the Family Support Act of 1988 sanctioned teenagers were included in the definition of dependent children. With this change Wisconsin began providing caretaker grants (effective July 1, 1989) with a combination of federal and state reimbursement for caseheads whose only dependent was a teenager sanctioned under Learnfare.

Table 10:

AFDC FAMILY ALLOWANCE BY SIZE OF CASE
(as of September 1, 1987 for Area 1 of the state)

Number in AFDC Case	AFDC Payment*	Reduction in Grant Formula with 1 Learnfare Sanction
Two	$440.00	-$191.20
Three	517.60	- 77.60
Four	617.60	- 100.00
Five	708.80	- 91.20
Six	766.40	- 57.60
Seven	829.60	- 63.20

*The actual amount of each grant is dependent upon income from outside earnings, child support and other sources. These amounts are for Area 1 of the state which includes Milwaukee and eighteen other counties.

The U.S. Family Support Administration granted DHSS a waiver from the provision of the Family Support Act of 1988 which required a conciliation procedure to resolve disputes related to clients' participation in JOBS (Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training) prior to sanctioning. The state's waiver also exempted it from requirements for assessment, counseling and supportive services. All teens whose families are subject to sanctioning because they fail to meet attendance or school enrollment requirements are notified of their right to a fair hearing challenging the sanction. AFDC clients in Milwaukee represented by Legal Action of Wisconsin brought a class action suit against DHSS for sanctioning them in violation of the Social Security Act and the due process and equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. An October 23, 1990 court stipulation between these clients and DHSS significantly modifies the procedures for verifying enrollment and attendance information and the procedures for determining school exemptions prior to sanctioning of Learnfare clients in Milwaukee County. The modifications, as implemented, will be described in subsequent evaluation documents.

B. Limitations of the State's Learnfare and School Status Data

The evaluators requested DHSS computer records for all AFDC recipients including teens ages thirteen through nineteen for the period of the Learnfare experiment. It was expected that this data could be used to describe the school enrollment experience of Learnfare teens statewide, but that hypothesis testing of the actual impact of the Learnfare policy would be limited to the samples of teens in the Milwaukee Public Schools and five other school districts. While it is possible to summarize this data to describe the administration of Learnfare, the data is far more limited in nature and flawed by inaccuracies than was anticipated at the onset of the Learnfare evaluation. First, it is critical to note that the fields in the CRN system used for Learnfare administration were not established for purposes of the evaluation (although the original Learnfare waiver request to the federal government anticipated its use for those purposes). The problems of the file have been identified so that the evaluation does not err in its summary data on the Learnfare process or rely upon faulty computer fields in drawing the samples of Learnfare, pre-Learnfare, or non-AFDC teens for hypotheses testing. The following problems were identified with the data which require alternative data collection and preclude the use of the CRN data to summarize the in-school experience of Learnfare teens.

- At the start of the 1988-89 school year, 1,754 teens ages fourteen through nineteen were coded as "children under age 13." Data on the school attendance of these teens was not recorded from the client or the schools. Again, at the start of the 1989-90 school year, 667 teens ages fourteen through nineteen were miscoded "children under age 13" and their school attendance or enrollment was not monitored by the state system. Another 829 teens who were age thirteen in September, 1989 retained the "children under age 13" code for another seven months or more in spite of the requirement that the code be removed in the first six-month review held in a month after the child turns thirteen.

- 3,901 teens had a missing, obviously miscoded or "0" grade for the highest grade completed their last month under Learnfare during the sixteen month study period although this field is the only one available to suggest whether teens have graduated from high school or earned a GED credential. Another 2,696 teens showed an increase of three to fifteen grade levels completed over the sixteen month period, perhaps due to corrections in erroneous grade levels at the start of the period.

- For administrative purposes the population of in-school youth was divided into those with good attendance (fewer than ten full days of unexcused absences the prior semester) whose attendance is monitored at the six-month review on a semester basis, and those with poor attendance whose attendance is monitored each month. In many cases, these categories do not accurately distinguish between those teens with attendance problems and those without. Income maintenance workers were instructed to place teens on monthly monitoring if they did not have school records showing the number of full days of unexcused absences. Teens in Milwaukee in the Spring of 1988 were coded on the basis of six weeks attendance experience rather than the prior semester. Further, some workers in Milwaukee reported coding dropouts who returned to school as "students in good standing" in order to give them a "fresh" start.

- 334 teens who were sanctioned as dropouts were within three months recoded as students in good standing with fewer than ten full days of unexcused absences in their prior semester. Used in this way these codes are incompatible, suggesting that either the teen was improperly sanctioned as a dropout or miscoded subsequently as a student with a good attendance record.

- An "unverified" code may be used at the time of the client's six-month review to reestablish that the teen is enrolled in school and to determine the number of unexcused absences for the prior semester if the client does not bring this documentation to the review. This code is intended as a temporary code. However, during the sixteen month period, the "unverified" code persisted from four to sixteen months for 1,240 teens.

- Similarly, the school "not found" code is used when a client names a school which does not verify the teen's enrollment or fails to identify the teen's school of enrollment. When this occurs the client is given ten days to produce proper verification of the teen's school enrollment.[1] For 2,541 teens this code continued to be used for two to eleven months. As a result, the actual school enrollment of these teens is unknown for that period.

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[1] At the time of application caseheads have thirty days to provide verification of the school in which the teen is enrolled.

- Given the limited computer codes used for the administration of Learnfare, it is not possible to determine the reason teens are exempted from school and whether some of these exemptions are temporary or permanent. A "9990" code is supposed to be used to replace the local school code if the teen is permanently excused from school attendance under Learnfare and has been reviewed for possible welfare employment and training programs. At the same time, the Learnfare status code is to be replaced with the appropriate work program code. However, only 351 of the 2,926 teens assigned codes used exclusively for work program status in December, 1989 had the appropriate "9990" school code. Since the "9990" school code is not a reliable indicator that a teen is on work program status rather than Learnfare status, it is not possible to use the CRN system to determine which teens are expected to complete high school but are temporarily exempt from Learnfare and which teens are exempt from school and subject to (or exempt from) work programs.

- Analysis by school district is limited in several ways. In Milwaukee County, the Milwaukee Public School code was entered as a default for all youth without a school entry. As a result Milwaukee County suburban youth may be considered Milwaukee Public School dropouts for some of the months analyzed and youth sanctioned for failure to provide school data may have Milwaukee Public Schools listed as their school regardless of their residence. Statewide the school name was missing or miscoded for 271 teens classified as students with good attendance for December, 1989. Since the state Department of Health and Social Services did not expect VTAE districts to monitor student attendance for teens under the Learnfare requirement, income maintenance workers were instructed to enter the DHSS code for the secondary school district of any teens enrolled in VTAE schools unless a DHSS school code had been assigned for the VTAE district. (Only five of the sixteen VTAE districts have been assigned DHSS school codes.) Also, when teen dropouts are exempted from Learnfare and assigned to work program status code, their school district code is supposed to be replaced by a new "9990" school code, sometimes making it impossible to identify that teen's local school district without an address match for each local school district.

These errors and administrative procedures should not threaten the hypothesis testing of the evaluation since the evaluation will rely upon school district data rather than CRN records but they raise serious questions about the use of CRN data for interim progress reports on Learnfare outcomes. Reliable data on school achievement and completion rates will only be available after review of actual school records, which will begin in Milwaukee after negotiations for release of data are completed between DHSS and the Milwaukee Public Schools.

C. School District Involvement With Learnfare

In Wisconsin 429 public school districts offer elementary and secondary education to children. Under the state constitution, local school districts are required to provide free public education to youth between the ages of four and twenty years. The compulsory school attendance law in effect when Learnfare was passed required regular school attendance by youth between the ages of six and eighteen years, but provided that youth ages sixteen years and above could be "waived" from school attendance upon request of the youth and a parent or guardian. This "waiver" provision was eliminated by the state legislature in May, 1988.

DHSS administrative rules implementing the Learnfare policy allowed permanent exemptions from the school attendance requirement for teenagers ages sixteen and above not expected to graduate by age twenty. (See HSS 201.195(7)(a)(7), dated November 14, 1988). Since May, 1988 school districts may not exempt youth from school regardless of their credit attainment or likelihood of graduating. Teens aged sixteen and above may be excused from regular school attendance only to enroll in an educational program which leads to high school graduation or a high school equivalency diploma. (Sixteen year olds may only enroll in programs leading to high school graduation; seventeen and eighteen year olds may also enroll in high school equivalency diploma programs. Eighteen year olds remain subject to the compulsory school attendance law until they graduate, earn a high school equivalency diploma, or until the end of the school quarter or semester in which they turn eighteen.) For any student leaving the public school under these provisions, the school district must enter into a written agreement with the student, his or her parent or guardian, and the institution providing the student's new educational program. This agreement must outline the student's educational program, the time period needed for the student to graduate or complete a high school equivalency diploma, and specify how the student's performance will be monitored. At minimum these agreements must be monitored by the school district every semester, and these youth remain subject to the state's truancy laws and retain the right to be readmitted to the public school upon request.

Youth may meet the state compulsory attendance laws by enrollment in a private elementary or secondary school. Private schools are required to report their student enrollment annually to the Department of Public Instruction, but the department does not monitor the educational programs in these schools. Or parents may comply with the compulsory attendance laws by educating their own children, but not other children, at home under state law governing home-based private educational programs. In addition, a state system of sixteen VTAE (Vocational, Technical and Adult Education) districts is also responsible for providing adult basic education to persons eighteen years and older.

State compulsory attendance laws require each school district to adopt written policies defining excused and unexcused absences for students. Under legislation passed in 1985 and modified by subsequent legislation, districts are also required to develop programs for children determined to be "at-risk" of dropping out of school and to provide special programs and services to keep

these youth in school, with state aids available for these programs. The Learnfare administrative rules require that families of teenagers sanctioned under Learnfare are provided information on the "Children at Risk" program in their local school district.

AFDC teens under the Learnfare requirement attend or are expected to attend over 450 schools in Wisconsin. Effective enforcement of the Learnfare policy required coordination and timely enrollment and attendance reports from most of these schools. The route chosen by DHSS for verification of Learnfare teens' school records was to use the Computer Reporting Network (CRN) system to generate monthly and periodic requests for data on individual teens from school districts and other schools throughout the state. As a condition for receiving AFDC, caseheads were required to sign a statement providing for release of their children's attendance data. School districts were given five days in which to compile this data. (Computer tape matches are utilized for the Milwaukee, Kenosha and Racine school districts.) In addition, those AFDC families who can verify through use of a school report card or other document their teen's regular school attendance may verify this information directly. Local districts are not contacted about school data for these teens and may be unaware that they are under the Learnfare policy.

In the fall of the 1989-90 school year (as of December, 1989), 394 of the state's 429 elementary and secondary school districts had Learnfare teens under the school enrollment or attendance requirement, including teens sanctioned as dropouts and coded as unverified, school not found, and thirteen year olds whose school records had not been reviewed. Thirty-five districts had no teens, and 157 of the public school districts had less than ten teens under the Learnfare requirement. (See Table 11) The majority of AFDC teens expected to attend school under Learnfare were coded for the Milwaukee Public Schools (forty-three percent of the total), but as noted some of these teens may actually reside outside the City of Milwaukee. Twenty large urban school districts, headed by Racine (with 976 Learnfare teens), Kenosha (706 teens), Green Bay (576 teens), and Madison (556 teens), had twenty-five percent of the total state Learnfare teen population. (See Table 12) Private schools and alternative education programs were identified for three percent of Learnfare teens, and 11.5 percent of all teen parents. These included some teens whose educational costs for tuition, books, fees and transportation expenses were provided through state funding. VTAE schools were listed for only eight percent of teen parents, and less than one percent of all teens. (The VTAE totals may be understated, since eleven of the sixteen VTAE districts are not assigned school entry codes for the CRN system.) Less than forty teens were enrolled in home-based private educational programs.

Table 11:

NUMBER OF LEARNFARE TEENS EXPECTED TO BE IN SCHOOL BY TYPE OF WISCONSIN SCHOOL
(as of December, 1989)

Type of School	In-School, on Semester Monitoring	In-School, on Monthly Monitoring [1]	"CH" Code [2]	Unverified or not Found	Sanctioned Dropouts [3]	Total	Teen Parents
Milwaukee Public Schools	6,462	1,892	998	577	820	10,749	571
20 public schools with 100-1,000 Learnfare teens	4,224	782	693	299	189	6,187	538
20 public schools with 50-99 Learnfare teens	909	167	171	127	37	1,411	83
100 public schools with 20-49 Learnfare teens	2,160	2,323	374	141	44	2,952	116
96 public schools with 10-19 Learnfare teens	988	87	168	83	16	1,342	52
157 public schools with 1-9 Learnfare teens	570	54	112	27	10	773	37
35 public schools with 0 Learnfare teens	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SUB-TOTAL - PUBLIC SCHOOLS	15,313	3,215	2,516	1,254	1,116	23,414	1,397
Private schools and other private programs	410	86	43	175	25	739	217
4 VTAE districts	40	37	-	73	19	169	155
Home-based private educational programs	36	-	**	-	-	36	**
Out-of-state schools and ESL	24	-	**	-	-	24	**
School name missing or miscoded	271	-	351	-	-	622	115
TOTAL	16,094	3,338	2,910	1,502	1,160	25,004	1,884

1 Includes sanctioned and non-sanctioned teens whose school attendance is monitored monthly.
2 Code for "children under age 13." used until first six-month review after a child's 13th birthday.
3 Includes only teens sanctioned as dropouts. Does not include teen dropouts exempted from school attendance.

** Data is withheld to avoid disclosure of information for individuals. Where necessary, complementary suppression of totals is applied to prevent the derivation of primary suppressed data by subtraction.

Table 12: NUMBER OF LEARNFARE TEENS EXPECTED TO BE IN SCHOOL (as of December, 1989)
School Districts with 100 - 1,000 Learnfare Teens

School District	In-School, on Semester Monitoring	In-School, on Monthly Monitoring 1	"CH" Code 2	Unverified or not Found	Sanctioned Dropouts 3	Total	Teen Parents
Racine	665	164	105	6	36	976	102
Kenosha	510	85	50	35	26	706	103
Green Bay	425	46	85	**	20	576	47
Madison	278	103	66	89	20	556	43
Beloit	240	99	53	9	35	436	39
Eau Claire	298	25	25	9	**	360	22
LaCrosse	296	11	31	12	10	360	31
Sheboygan	140	54	34	22	-	250	17
Superior	185	27	22	-	5	239	14
Oshkosh	172	23	32	-	11	238	19
Wausau	184	19	23	**	**	226	16
Janesville	134	28	20	-	12	194	27
Appleton	130	23	13	8	-	174	9
Stevens Point	120	8	18	7	**	153	13
Manitowoc	101	24	9	5	**	139	**
Fond du Lac	87	15	18	10	-	130	11
Menominee Indian	67	9	48	-	-	124	5
Waukesha	81	11	21	**	**	113	10
Wisconsin Rapids	85	**	6	17	**	108	5
West Allis-West Milwaukee	26	**	14	63	**	103	**
TOTAL - 20 Districts	4,224	782	693	299	189	6,187	538

1 Includes sanctioned and non-sanctioned teens whose school attendance is monitored monthly.
2 Code for "children under age 13." used until first six-month review afster a child's 13th birthday.
3 Includes only teens sanctioned as dropouts. Does not include teen dropouts exempted from school attendance.

** Data is withheld to avoid disclosure of information for individuals. Where necessary, complementary suppression of totals is applied to prevent the derivation of primary suppressed data by subtraction.

V. Survey of Public School Officials Regarding Implementation of Learnfare

The evaluators surveyed the district administrators of the 429 public school districts in the state in April, 1990 to solicit information on the implementation of Learnfare in their districts. (A copy of the survey and summary of responses is included in the Appendix.) Follow-up phone calls were made to all school districts with fifty or more AFDC teens under the Learnfare requirement. In all, 351 school districts responded, or 82 percent of the total. The response rate for districts with forty or more AFDC teens under Learnfare was one hundred percent. The lowest response rates were from school districts, including elementary only districts, with ten or fewer teens under Learnfare. Most of the surveys were completed by the district administrator or the high school principal; in the larger districts the surveys were often forwarded to the director of pupil services for a response.

About one-fourth of the districts reported that they have been involved in meetings with their county social service agency to discuss policies or programs relating to the implementation of Learnfare. Topics covered at these meetings most often focused on methods of defining or taking student attendance. Of the eighty-one districts who reported meeting with county and/or state officials, the following areas were reported discussed:

- methods of reporting school attendance of AFDC teens (58 districts)
- clarification of school definitions of unexcused absences (55 districts)
- methods of notifying AFDC clients about the Learnfare requirements (53 districts)
- "Children at Risk" programs for students with poor attendance or returning dropouts (29 districts)
- use of county social workers to assist AFDC teens (26 districts)
- policies for waiving school attendance for older AFDC teens (18 districts)
- use of school social workers to assist AFDC teens (13 districts)
- creation of special school programs for teen mothers (12 districts).

About a sixth of the districts reported that they had school staff involved in in-service training regarding the Learnfare policy. School administrators were most likely to receive the training (so reported in 47 districts), followed by counselors (in 16 districts), teachers (in 5 districts), clerical staff (5 districts), and social workers (4 districts). Only four of the school districts with one hundred or more AFDC teens

indicated that their staff had received in-service training, and none of these districts indicated that the training had involved teachers or social workers.

Policies varied as to how districts handled information on AFDC teens whose attendance is being monitored. Of those districts reporting that they receive names of AFDC teens for monthly monitoring, 38 percent provide the names to administrators, 25 percent forward the names to school social workers, counselors or psychologists, and 4 percent forward the names to teachers. Over 90 percent of the districts reporting said they did not receive names from the county or state of AFDC teens who have dropped out of school.

A number of districts reported that their attendance policies have been revised during the last three years, including new or clarified definitions of unexcused absences, new methods for notifying parents of absences, new or clarified definitions of a "full-day" absence, and computerized records of absences. These changes were usually attributed to the Compulsory School Attendance and Truancy Prevention Act, enacted in 1988, or to both this law and Learnfare. Many districts also expanded their "Children At-Risk" Programs, again primarily in response to recent changes in state law governing the "Children At-Risk" programs. Nearly all of the districts with high schools are offering special school programs for teen parents, usually operated by the local district. The programs include home-bound instruction, alternative education programs, parenting classes, and classes in independent living. A small number of districts reported offering on-site day care, and only a few provide transportation to and from day care for children of teen parents.

In addition to questions about the implementation of Learnfare, school district officials were asked in their opinion, what changes in the attendance of AFDC teens they would attribute to Learnfare. Thirty percent of those responding checked "improved attendance," 1 percent checked "poorer attendance," 56 percent checked "no observed change," and 13 percent checked "don't know." A second question asked, "In your opinion, what changes in the academic performance of AFDC teens in your district would you attribute to the Learnfare policy?" Fourteen percent of those responding checked "improved school performance," less than 1 percent checked "poorer school performance," 66 percent checked "no observed change," and 19 percent checked "don't know." For both questions, districts with fewer Learnfare teens were less likely to report improvements in student attendance or performance. It should be noted that while districts are provided the names of their teens on monthly monitoring of attendance they may be unaware of all other teens who are under the Learnfare requirement.

Seventy-two districts reported that their staff had "observed dropouts returning to school where Learnfare or AFDC payments were identified as a reason." Of these districts, sixty responded to a follow-up question and estimated that one to twenty dropouts had returned, for a total of 214 teens in those districts.

VI. Survey of County Officials Regarding Implementation of Learnfare

In August, 1990 the evaluators surveyed the directors of the 72 county department of social or human services regarding implementation of Learnfare in their area. All counties completed the survey. (The survey instrument is included in the Appendix.)

When Learnfare was first instituted for teen parents and 13-14 year old teen dependents in Spring of 1988, the Department of Health and Social Services used regional staff to contact the families of teens recorded as dropouts to explain the Learnfare policy to them. Most of the counties (66) also explained the policy in person to clients during the clients' first six-month review after Learnfare was initiated, and 57 counties reported continuing to explain the Learnfare policy at subsequent six-month reviews. Three counties also met with teen dropouts to explain the policy. The counties reported that nearly all had staff who attended training sessions on the implementation of the Learnfare policy and about half in turn trained other local county staff. The emphasis for training was upon income maintenance line staff (trained in 67 of the counties) and income maintenance staff supervisors (trained in 58 counties). Six counties reported that their social work staff received in-service training on the implementation of Learnfare. Sixty counties reported increased workload for income maintenance workers as a result of Learnfare, as compared to 17 counties reporting increased referrals to county social services to AFDC families with teenagers. (The counties received increased state funding for income maintenance workers to implement the Learnfare policy but not for social service staff.) A number of counties saw the income maintenance workers as partially responsible for providing services and counseling to AFDC families sanctioned for a teen's poor attendance or failure to enroll in school. Eighteen counties said income maintenance workers were responsible at least in part for providing services and counseling to families of teens sanctioned as dropouts, and 21 counties saw income maintenance workers responsible for providing services and counseling to families of teens sanctioned for poor school attendance.

Practices vary by county, with most counties reporting that they do not refer Learnfare teens to county social work staff unless the family requests help. When referrals are made to social work staff by income maintenance workers, referrals are likely to be for families sanctioned under Learnfare (26 counties reported making such referrals) or to assist families of teens who have dropped out of school (25 counties reported such referrals). At the time of the survey (before the state DHSS contracted for case management services under the June 4, 1990 federal waiver agreement), about half of the counties responded that county social workers or the school district and county social workers were responsible for providing services or counseling to sanctioned AFDC families in their county. Sixteen counties indicated that "no one" was responsible for providing such services. About a third of the counties reported that they thought the Learnfare policy had contributed to increased parental involvement in the AFDC teens' schooling. Thirteen counties thought Learnfare contributed to increased family tension but none thought it contributed to increased child abuse or neglect.

Nearly forty percent of the county officials reported that cooperation had improved between school and county social service staff. Forty-two of the 72 counties reported meeting with local school districts to discuss the implementation of Learnfare. (Several others commented that they have communicated by letter or phone.) As reported by school officials these meetings appeared to focus primarily on methods of collecting student attendance data for the purposes of sanctioning teens not enrolled or attending school regularly. A number of counties also reported discussing "Children at Risk Programs" available for AFDC teens with poor attendance patterns or for returning dropouts and the availability of state funds for day care and transportation to day care. Nineteen counties reported meeting with their local VTAE district to discuss implementation of Learnfare. Most of these counties discussed GED programs available for high school dropouts and methods for reporting VTAE school attendance of AFDC teens. During these meetings a smaller number (9 counties) reported discussing possible programming for teen mothers.

VII. Focus of the Evaluation of Learnfare

Because the Learnfare experiment added new conditions for the receipt of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) payments in Wisconsin, the state was required to obtain waivers from the federal Social Security Act regulating the AFDC program. In May, 1987, DHSS submitted a request to the Family Support Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for waivers from the Social Security Act, Section 1115 to implement Learnfare and other welfare reform measures which the state department anticipated would receive legislative approval.

The Wisconsin Welfare Reform Package submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services established goals for the Learnfare policy in terms of "a reduced percentage of teenage AFDC mothers dropping out of school and an increased percentage of teenage mothers who have dropped out returning to school." The stated objectives for teenage mothers were "to achieve a rate of less than 20% sanctions for children already in school and a 50% return rate in the first year, a 65% return rate in the second year and an 80% return rate in the third year for those out of school." (Waiver Package, p. 51) For dependent teens the Learnfare policy was expected to "increase the proportion of AFDC children in a high risk group who regularly attend school." Program objectives for dependent teens were stated in terms of numerical goals for children in the "high risk group," defined as teens with more than ten unexcused absences in a previous semester. In the first year of Learnfare, 30% of these teens were expected to attend school regularly, in the second year 50%, and in the third year 80% of the "high risk group" were expected to attend school regularly. (Waiver, p. 52)

The evaluation was to be conducted internally by the Department of Health and Social Services with data drawn exclusively from the DHSS Computer Reporting Network system and complemented by a survey of income maintenance workers to identify factors that might be associated with a successful school outcome. (Waiver, p. 51-52) In DHSS's discussion of the costs and benefits

of replicating Learnfare in other states, the department emphasized that cost savings were not a goal of Learnfare.

> Although noncompliant teens will be sanctioned with a loss of one month's benefits for each month in which they do not meet attendance requirements, the purpose of this initiative is to keep teens in school until graduation, not to save benefit dollars. The success of this initiative will be measured in the increased numbers of AFDC young people who successfully complete a high school education. The long term goal is to reduce future dependency through adequate preparation for the modern labor force. (Waiver, pp. 70-71)

The Wisconsin legislature first recommended that the Department of Public Instruction evaluate the effectiveness of the school attendance requirement of Learnfare. (1987 Wisconsin Act 27, Section 1014(u)). The Department of Public Instruction was to compare Learnfare's effectiveness under five sets of circumstances:

1. when Learnfare operated alone,
2. when Learnfare was operated in conjunction with the guaranteed jobs program,
3. when Learnfare was operated in conjunction with a job training and placement program operated by a private subcontractor,
4. when Learnfare was operated in conjunction with an in-school day care program, and
5. when Learnfare was operated in conjunction with a private business scholarship program. (1987 Wisconsin Act 27, Section 1014ym)

This section was vetoed by Governor Thompson who argued that such a study would be redundant, given the anticipated DHSS evaluation.

On October 20, 1987 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services approved the waivers requested for the Learnfare portion of the Wisconsin Welfare Reform Demonstration with terms and conditions for the evaluation of Learnfare to be negotiated between DHSS and the U.S. Family Support Administration. In June, 1988 the Wisconsin legislature passed a bill requiring that the Learnfare evaluation be conducted by an outside evaluator and that DHSS enter into contract with the evaluator by January 1, 1989. (1987 Wisconsin Act 413, Section 12) Finally, on July 17, 1989, DHSS entered into a contract with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and

Training Institute to conduct the evaluation.[1] The contract maintained the legislated date for completion of the evaluation final report of July 1, 1993.

The Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services outlined the major evaluation questions identified by the state and federal departments in its September, 1988 "Request for Proposals - Evaluation of the Welfare Reform Waivers." Three questions were identified for hypothesis testing of the impact of Learnfare.

1. Question 1: Do teenage AFDC recipients continue to attend school, attend school more regularly, or return to school after having dropped out in order to retain AFDC benefits under Learnfare? (RFP, p. 21)

2. Question 2: Did Learnfare have any measurable impact on the school completion rates of AFDC teenagers? (RFP, p. 23)

3. Question 3: Did Learnfare have any impact on teen AFDC recipients' childbearing? (RFP, p. 23)

The evaluators were also directed to prepare a process evaluation of Learnfare which would "describe the implementation of Learnfare and its impact on AFDC recipient families, school districts, and school-linked day care resources." (RFP, p. 24)

Rather than establish Learnfare experimental and control groups to be used for hypothesis testing, the state chose to rely upon quasi-experimental research designs which included comparison of pre- and post-Learnfare teen populations. The state RFP recommended the use of non-AFDC teen populations in the state as non-equivalent control groups in order to strengthen the quasi-experimental design and to treat threats to the experiment due to history and maturation. Because the evaluation contract was not approved until sixteen months after the Learnfare policy was implemented, the evaluators did not observe the initial start up of the program nor have input into the methods of collecting administrative data on school attendance, completion, provision of day care services, or funding for transportation to and from day care. The Learnfare record keeping system relied principally upon the state's Computer Reporting Network (CRN) system, considered to be a state of the art computer system for state welfare administration. The CRN was programmed to generate most client notifications and requests for data from local school districts. In the interest of saving time and administrative costs, a limited number of codes were introduced for Learnfare-

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[1] The Employment and Training Institute responded to contract design modification requests from the state and federal governments in January, 1989 within 21 working days of their receipt. Subsequent contract modifications requested of the Employment and Training Institute were completed in each instance within two working days of their receipt. The remainder of the delays in signing the Learnfare evaluation contract were due to state and federal reviews.

age teens and existing fields of data were used to accept these codes along with the data needed for other welfare administrative purposes.

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute's evaluation research design, approved by the state and federal governments in December, 1989, is organized around the following hypotheses and subhypotheses:

1. Hypothesis 1: Learnfare increases the total school attendance of teenage AFDC recipients.

    a. Subhypothesis 1a: Learnfare has a greater impact on school attendance of younger teens than older teens.

    b. Subhypothesis 1b: Learnfare has a greater impact on school attendance of non-parent AFDC recipients than teen mothers on AFDC.

    c. Subhypothesis 1c: School enrollment during the implementation of Learnfare was greater than expected in the absence of Learnfare.

    d. Subhypothesis 1d: Learnfare increases the enrollment of AFDC teens in alternative education programs.

2. Hypothesis 2: Learnfare increases the school completion rates of teenage AFDC recipients.

    a. Subhypothesis 2a: Learnfare has a greater impact on school completion rates of younger teenagers than older teens.

    b. Subhypothesis 2b: Learnfare has a greater impact on school completion rates of teen non-parents than teen parents.

3. Hypothesis 3: Learnfare improves the school performance of teenage AFDC recipients.

    a. Subhypothesis 3a: Learnfare has a greater impact on improving school performance of younger teens than older teens.

    b. Subhypothesis 3b: Learnfare has a greater impact on improving school performance of teens who have no children than of teen parents.

    c. Subhypothesis 3c: Existing dropout prevention programs contribute to Learnfare success as measured by high school completion and credits earned.

d. Subhypothesis 3d: Learnfare is less effective for individuals who have compounding social and eduction problems.

4. Hypothesis 4: Learnfare reduces the incidence of female teen AFDC recipients' childbearing.

The Learnfare research design also includes a process evaluation of Learnfare based on interviews with state and local officials, surveys of Wisconsin school districts and county departments of social/human services, surveys of AFDC clients, and analysis of state and local data. The Employment and Training Institute is conducting a second evaluation of the Wisconsin Work Experience and Job Training Program (WEJT) and the Community Work Experience Program (CWEP) which considers the impact of Learnfare along with other welfare reform changes affecting the WEJT/CWEP program.

It was anticipated that the pre-Learnfare teen population would be analyzed by school district prior to selection of the representative school districts for state sampling for hypothesis testing. Because of delays in receiving existing DHSS computer records promised by January 1, 1990, the cluster analysis used for selecting representative school districts in the state was conducted without use of this data.

Cluster analysis has been used to group the forty Wisconsin school districts (excluding Milwaukee Public Schools) enrolling fifty or more Learnfare teens into four relatively homogeneous groups for sampling purposes. A fifth school district was selected using cluster analysis for the remaining public school districts in the state, with the five non-Milwaukee districts regionally diverse. The evaluators are working with four of the selected districts and negotiating with a fifth district for its participation.

The study of Learnfare in Milwaukee Public Schools is critical to any statewide assessment of the success or failure of the Learnfare policy. In the fall semester of 1989-90 (as of December, 1989), forty-three percent of teens in the state who were expected to attend school under the Learnfare policy were coded as in the Milwaukee Public Schools district and over three-fourths (seventy-seven percent) of the Learnfare sanctions that month were for teens from Milwaukee. (These numbers may be high. When Learnfare began, the Milwaukee Public Schools was the default school code for any Milwaukee County AFDC youth without a school code. Totals for Milwaukee Public Schools may include students whose actual school is unknown or who reside in suburban districts.) DHSS has been negotiating with the Milwaukee Public Schools since Summer, 1989 to establish arrangements for securing middle and high school data on Learnfare, pre-Learnfare and non-AFDC teens' school enrollment, performance and completion for the Learnfare evaluation. The Milwaukee City Attorney is reviewing how Milwaukee school data can be provided in accordance with state and federal law protecting the confidentiality of student records.

An analysis of student performance in Milwaukee is essential to the Learnfare evaluation. Many other states are considering Learnfare as a policy to improve the school performance and lessen the welfare dependency of young people in their urban areas. Under the state's quasi-experimental design, it is necessary not only to establish the pre-Learnfare experience of AFDC teens but also to use a pre- and post-Learnfare non-equivalent control group of non-AFDC teens in order to control for other changes in school policy and programming that might affect changes in student attendance and performance. The Milwaukee Public Schools system under Superintendent Dr. Robert Peterkin initiated a series of reforms, in addition to the state's Learnfare policy, to address the problems of high dropout rates and poor student attendance and performance including a decentralization of the school administration, creation of six Service Delivery Areas to assist local schools in improving instruction and administration, expansion of site-based management in a number of local schools, expansion of Milwaukee's "Children At-Risk" programming, increased contracting with community-based organizations, and development of cooperative programs with the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services' "Youth Initiative." In addition, state legislation implemented during the Learnfare experiment altered the state's compulsory attendance law, required expansion of local school districts' programs for "Children At-Risk" aimed at decreasing the number of dropouts and improving the school performance of targeted groups of students, increased the penalty options available for enforcement of new school truancy laws, and required creation of county-school district truancy committees and adoption of truancy enforcement plans in each county of the state.

In June, 1990 the federal government required an accelerated "impact analysis of the effect of Learnfare provision on school attendance on AFDC teens by September 1, 1991" as a condition for Learnfare's continuation. The evaluators have prepared a research design and time line for this accelerated evaluation and are prepared to enter into contract for this work once DHSS computer tapes requested in 1989 and Milwaukee Public School student data required for the study are secured. The accelerated study will test the hypotheses that Learnfare increases the total school attendance of teenage AFDC recipients and that Learnfare positively impacts on school credits and grades earned for AFDC high school-age teens. This work is expected to require ten months of work after student records have been secured from the Milwaukee Public Schools, and the evaluation has been seriously delayed by the slow process of negotiations between DHSS and the Milwaukee Public Schools for data. The final evaluation testing the four major hypotheses identified above will be submitted to the Wisconsin legislature by June 30, 1993.

APPENDIX

350 RESPONDENTS

Public School Survey for the Wisconsin Learnfare Evaluation

1. About how many teenagers are under the Learnfare requirements in your school district, as far as you know?

57 none 250 1 to 20 26 21 to 100 10 over 100

2. Have county officials or staff from the county social service agency met with your school staff to discuss policies or programs relating to the implementation of Learnfare?

77 yes 243 no 29 don't know

If yes, what areas were discussed? (Please check all that apply.)

50 methods of notifying AFDC clients about the Learnfare requirements
16 policies for waiving school attendance for older AFDC teens
52 clarification of school definitions of unexcused absences
54 methods of reporting school attendance of AFDC teens
28 "Children At-Risk Programs" for students with poor attendance or returning dropouts
12 use of school social workers to assist AFDC teens
25 use of county social workers to assist AFDC teens
10 creation of special school programs for teen mothers
5 other (Please describe) _____

If yes, who was the contact person at the county?

Name: _____
Position: _____ County: _____

3. Have staff from the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services met with your school officials regarding the implementation of Learnfare?

21 yes 285 no 42 don't know

If yes, what areas were discussed? (Please check all that apply.)

13 methods of notifying AFDC clients about the Learnfare requirements
5 policies for waiving school attendance for older AFDC teens
14 clarification of school definitions of unexcused absences
16 methods of reporting school attendance of AFDC teens
6 "Children At-Risk Programs" for returning school dropouts
3 use of school social workers to assist AFDC teens
5 use of county social workers to assist AFDC teens
5 creation of special school programs for teen mothers
5 other (Please identify) _____

4. Were any of your staff involved in in-service training regarding the Learnfare policy?

52 yes 265 no 30 don't know

If yes, please indicate which staff received training. (Please check all that apply.)

5 teachers 4 social workers 47 administrators
16 counselors 5 clerical staff 6 other (identify) _____

If yes, who provided the training? (Check all that apply)

9 school district
15 CESA
26 county social service department
7 Wisconsin Dept. of Health and Social Services
6 other (Please identify) _____

5. About how many teen mothers do you have in your school district? _____

6. Do you provide transportation to and from day care for children of teen parents in your schools?

15 yes 319 no

7. Does your school district offer on-site day care or day care near the school for children of teen parents?

321 no 23 yes If yes, about how many children are in day care this semester? ___

If yes, when did you first establish this day care? _____
(Month and year)

8. Do you offer special school programs for teen parents?

246 yes 99 no

If yes, what areas are offered? (Check all that apply)

146 parenting classes
90 classes in independent living
166 alternative education programs
189 home-based instruction
31 other (Please describe) _____

If yes, who operates these programs? (Check all that apply)

234 local school district
14 community-based organizations
15 VTAE district (Which VTAE district?) _____
27 other (Please identify) _____

If yes, about how many teen parents are enrolled in these programs this semester? _____

9. Does your school district receive names of AFDC teens from the county whose school attendance is monitored monthly?

205 yes 119 no 22 don't know

If yes, do any school staff receive the names for follow-up services? (Check any that apply)

51 social workers, counselors or psychologists
78 administrators
2 teachers
6 others (Please identify) _____

11 Doesn't apply. The school does not receive names of AFDC teens for verification of attendance.
40 Don't know

10. Does your school district receive names of AFDC teens from the county or the state who have dropped out of school?

17 yes 279 no 47 don't know

If yes, which school staff, if any, are assigned to contact these teens? (Check any that apply)

10 social workers or counselors
2 teachers
11 administrators
2 clerical staff
1 other (Please identify) _____

1 none
11 Doesn't apply. The school does not receive names of AFDC teens who have dropped out of school.

11. What changes in social services provided to AFDC families with teens would you attribute to the Learnfare policy, if any? (Check all that apply)

35 increased contact with AFDC families by school social workers, counselors or psychologists
-- decreased contact with AFDC families by school social workers, counselors or psychologists
57 increased contact with county social service staff regarding AFDC families
4 decreased contact with county social service staff regarding AFDC families
48 improved cooperation between school and county social service staff
5 poorer cooperation between school and county social service staff

183 no changes observed
70 don't know

12. Do you provide counseling to families whose AFDC monthly benefits are reduced because of their teen's failure to attend school regularly?

28 yes 192 no 103 unsure which families are sanctioned 12 don't know

13. During the last three years the state legislature has established Learnfare requirements for AFDC teens and revised compulsory attendance and truancy laws for all teens. What changes in your attendance policies, if any, would you attribute to either of these legislative acts? (Check all that apply under "Learnfare Policy," "Compulsory Attendance and Truancy Laws," or "Both.")

	Learnfare Policy	Compulsory Attendance and Truancy Law	Both
232 new or clarified definitions of unexcused absences	3	171	48
68 new procedures for taking classroom attendance	--	48	15
131 new or clarified definitions of a full-day absence	7	90	31
118 computerized records of absences	3	74	35
144 new methods for notifying parents of absences	2	105	31
18 other (Please identify) _____	--	8	4

61 no changes
11 don't know

14. Have you expanded your "Children At-Risk Program" in the last two years?

272 yes 69 no 6 don't know

If yes, why did you expand the program? (Check any reasons that apply)

206 to address changes in the "Children At-Risk" legislation
34 to meet the needs of teens under the Learnfare requirement
147 to address a local initiative
14 other _____

Please describe briefly:

15. What cooperative arrangements for school programing would you attribute to the Learnfare policy, if any? (Check all that apply.)

258 no change
39 don't know

28 increased alternative education programs with community-based organizations
1 decreased alternative education programs with community-based organizations
24 increased programs with the VTAE district
-- decreased programs with the VTAE district
3 other

Please briefly describe these programs:

16. In you opinion, what changes in the attendance of AFDC teens in your districts would you attribute to the Learnfare policy?

103 improved attendance 192 no observed change
4 poorer attendance 45 don't know

Comments:

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17. In your opinion, what changes in the academic performance of AFDC teens in your district would you attribute to the Learnfare policy?

48 improved school performance
2 poorer school performance
226 no observed change
66 don't know

Comments:

18. Have you or your staff observed any dropouts returning to school where Learnfare or AFDC payments were identified as a reason?

72 yes
231 no
41 don't know

If yes, about how many dropouts have you observed returning where Learnfare or AFDC payments were identified as a reason? ____

Comments:

We welcome additional comments regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the Learnfare policy:

Thank you for your assistance. If you would like to receive a copy of the report on this survey, please indicate. ___Yes, send me a copy.

Name of Person Completing Survey: _____

Title : _____

Name of School District: _____ Phone: ( ) _____

Please return this survey to: Employment and Training Institute, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, P.O. Box 413, Milwaukee, WI 53201. Phone (414) 229-4934.

72 Respondents

COUNTY SURVEY FOR THE WISCONSIN LEARNFARE EVALUATION

1. Were any of your staff involved in in-service training regarding the Learnfare policy?

70 yes 1 no ___ don't know

If yes, please indicate which staff received training. (Check all that apply.)

58 income maintenance worker supervisors
67 income maintenance workers
6 county social workers
6 county administrators
5 other (identify) _____

If yes, who provided the training? (Check all that apply.)

67 Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services
31 county staff
1 CESA (Cooperative Educational Service Agency)
2 other (identify) _____

2. In addition to state materials distributed to AFDC clients, how did you inform families in your county on AFDC about the Learnfare policy when it was first implemented? (Check all that apply.)

1 sent a letter or brochure to each casehead
66 explained the policy in person during the first client six-month review after Learnfare implementation
57 explained the policy to the client at every six-month review
1 met with each casehead with teen dependents to explain the policy
3 met with each teenage dropout to explain the policy
0 met with each teenager (non-casehead) to explain the policy
9 other (Please describe) _____

3. How do you explain the Learnfare policy to families applying for AFDC? (Check all that apply)

70 explain the policy orally during the application process.
57 provide a written statement or brochure to the family during the application process.
1 send a letter or brochure to the casehead if the family is determined eligible for aid.
2 other (Please explain) _____

4. Did your staff meet with local school districts to discuss the implementation of Learnfare?

42 yes 18 no 5 don't know

If yes, which of the following issues were discussed? (Check all that apply.)

26 methods of notifying AFDC clients about the Learnfare requirements
32 policies for waiving school attendance for older AFDC teens
31 clarification of school definitions of unexcused absences
39 methods of reporting school attendance of AFDC teens
28 "Children At-Risk Programs" for students with poor attendance or returning dropouts
7 use of school social workers to assist AFDC teens
15 use of county social workers to assist AFDC teens
28 availability of state funds for day care and transportation to day care
12 creation of special school programs for teen mothers
9 other (Please describe) _____

If yes, please list the school districts with whom you met.

_____

_____

_____

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5. Did your staff meet with your local VTAE (Vocational, Technical and Adult Education) district to discuss the implementation of Learnfare?

19 yes 46 no 4 don't know

If yes, what issues were discussed? (Check all that apply.)

9 special programming for teen parents
17 methods of reporting school attendance of AFDC teens.
7 policies for waiving high school attendance for older teens.
18 GED programs available for high school dropouts.
15 high school completion programs available for high school dropouts.
2 other (Please explain) _____

_____

If yes, name of VTAE district _____

VTAE staff person contacted: _____

6. Do you assist teen parents under the Learnfare requirement to find day care for their children?

64 yes 6 no ___ don't know

7. Which of the following services does your staff provide, if any, to AFDC teens who have dropped out of school and are subject to sanction under Learnfare? (Please check any services you provide and the frequency it is provided to dropouts.)

	SERVICE IS PROVIDED TO:			
SERVICE PROVIDED	All Dropouts	Most (more than 1/2) Dropouts	Some (less than 1/2) Dropouts	A few (1 - 3) Dropouts
individual counseling	19	7	5	7
family counseling	17	8	6	6
arrange for an appropriate school placement	8	8	5	4
arrange for enrollment in a VTAE school	8	8	7	4
alcohol and drug counseling or referral	12	7	6	6
counseling for child abuse or neglect	16	6	8	5
assistance finding day care	19	13	8	1
payments for day care or transportation to day care	18	6	7	7
other (please describe) _____				
_____				
_____		2		1

Comments:

Another six counties indicated that they provide all of these services to any youth who need them.

8. Under what circumstances do your income maintenance workers refer AFDC families to county social work staff as part of the Learnfare implementation? (Check any that apply.)

26 when families are sanctioned under the Learnfare policy
5 at AFDC clients' six-month review to determine if "good cause" exemptions to school attendance should be applied for their teens
44 when AFDC families request help in meeting the Learnfare school attendance requirements
10 to assist families of teens who are monitored monthly for school attendance
25 to assist families of teens who have dropped out of school
17 other (Please explain) _____

_____

Comments:

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9. What changes, if any, have you observed in staff work which you would attribute to the Learnfare policy? (Check any that apply)

17 Increased referrals for county social services to AFDC families with teenagers
0 decreased referrals for county social services to AFDC families with teenagers
60 increased workload for income maintenance workers
0 decreased workloads for income maintenance workers
27 improved cooperation between school and county social service staff
1 less cooperation between school and county social service staff
15 increased contact with AFDC families by school social workers and counselors
0 decreased contact with AFDC families by school social workers and counselors

0 no changes observed
1 don't know

Comments:

10. In your county who is responsible for providing services or counseling to AFDC families with youth who are sanctioned under Learnfare for poor school attendance? (Check any that apply)

16 no one
28 the public school system
21 the family's income maintenance worker
33 a county social worker
5 community social service agencies
10 other (Please explain) _____

2 don't know

Comments:

11. In your county who is responsible for providing services or counseling to AFDC families with teens who have dropped out of school? (Check any that apply)

16 no one
26 the public school system
18 the family's income maintenance worker
35 a county social worker
5 community social service agencies
13 other (Please explain) _____

1 don't know

12. How do you determine which teens may qualify for exemption from school attendance under Learnfare because of their inability to graduate by age twenty? (Check any that apply)

46 Income maintenance workers instruct older teens who are behind in school or dropouts to ask their high school whether they qualify for a waiver.

19 AFDC families are provided a list of possible exemptions and expected to inform their income maintenance worker if any apply.

4 Information regarding waivers from high school attendance is left entirely to the teens and the public schools.

26 other (Please explain) _____

2 don't know

13. What changes have you or your staff observed, if any, within AFDC families that you would attribute to the Learnfare policy? (Check any that apply)

13 increased family tension
2 decreased family tension
0 increased child abuse or neglect
1 decreased child abuse or neglect
28 increased parental involvement in the teen's schooling
0 decreased parental involvement in the teen's schooling
9 other (Please identify) _____
_____
27 no observed change
5 don't know

Comments:

We welcome your comments regarding the strengths and limitations of the Learnfare policy:

Name of Person Completing Survey: _____
Title: _____
County: _____ Phone: ( ) - _____

Please return this survey to: Employment and Training Institute, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, P. O. Box 413, Milwaukee, WI 53203. Phone (414) 229-4934.

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